

Apophatic Anthropology



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Apophatic Anthropology

An English Translation

By

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Translated from Romanian by

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PREFACE

This volume includes the first English translation of *The Apophatic Anthropology*, an unfinished work that served as the basis of André Scrima's 1956 thesis in Theology,¹ as well as the core of his doctoral dissertation, on which he worked in India between 1957 and 1958 and which he defended in Paris, in the 1960s.¹ The time before and during the writing of the *Apophatic Anthropology* was one of the most fecund periods in the author's intellectual life. By the time of his definitive departure from Romania, André Scrima had benefited already from a series of encounters that his intellectual formation with a solid foundation.² Between 1943 and 1948, he had been a student at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Bucharest; during the last two years, he was also the teaching assistant of Anton Dumitriu in Logic and in the History of Philosophy. Even though his thesis, *Logos and Dialectic In Plato*,³ has been lost, it is possible that the first

1 Andrei Pleșu, introduction to André Scrima's *Timpul Rugului aprins, Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană* (*The Time of the Burning Bush: The Spiritual Mentor in the Eastern Tradition*), Bucharest, Humanitas, 2000, p. 10.

2 See Vlad Alexandrescu, "Note despre parcursul intelectual al lui André Scrima" ("Notes on the intellectual path of André Scrima") in *O gândire fără țarmuri. Actele colocviului dedicat lui André Scrima* (*A Mind Without Borders. Proceedings of the Colloquium dedicated to André Scrima*), Humanitas, 2005.

3 See Andrei Pleșu, *Preface* to André Scrima, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

chapter of his thesis in theology ("Man Searching for Himself") has echoes of this first apprenticeship. In any case, it is certain that Anton Dumitriu mediated Scrima's access to Heidegger's thinking. It was the same Anton Dumitriu who in 1945 opened to him the road to the Antim Monastery,⁴ where he discovered the group of spiritual reflection that gathered around Sandu Tudor. At that time, Fr. Ivan Kulâghin, a monk who was chased away from the Optina Monastery, who arrived in Romania when the Romanian troupes withdrew from Ukraine and settled down at Cernica Monastery, was already visiting the group. Sometime between this moment and January 1947, when the Russian monk was deported back to the Soviet Union, the monk told the young Andrei, as remembered by several witnesses: "You need me!"⁵ It is impossible to exaggerate how impactful the subsequent years were to be for the intellectual and spiritual formation of the one who was to become brother Andrei. It is evident that the meetings, the conferences, and the spiritual retreats that the group used to organize and also the intellectual exchanges between the various members of the group were decisive for the formation of the young philosopher.

André Scrima's hermeneutic is established, first of all, on a phenomenological method that is well directed. He writes, "The apophatic attitude stops being determined here by subjective elements (that belong to the knowing subject) in order to be revealed as an objective structure, independent from the contingent creature and its gnoseo-

4 See André Scrima, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

5 See, for example, *Trepte duhovnicești. Interviu cu Părintele Roman Braga* (*Spiritual Steps. Interview with Father Roman Braga*), Alba Iulia, The Romanian Orthodox Archiepiscopate, 1998, p. 39. Of course, see also André Scrima's own testimony in *op. cit.*, p. 144.

logical aptitude or inaptitude.”⁶ This is a classic approach in phenomenology, which consists in passing, at a certain stage in the investigation of that which appears, from the subjectivity of things to their objectivity. The founding model for this method remains, of course, Descartes’ *Sixth Meditation*, and, in a more specific way, Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditation*. The essential difference between these two itineraries consists in the fact that Descartes, relying on God’s existence, on the divine goodness and veracity, arrives at an indubitable ontological status of things, even if the problem of knowing their qualities is suspended by the validation of the principles of a natural philosophy, while for Husserl any legitimacy of an object comes from its evidence for consciousness and, thus, from our transcendental subjectivity. As for the phenomenological approach, we also need to remember the problem of the existence of and the relation with other individuals. As it is known, even if this problem was not addressed specifically by Descartes, it receives a solution in Husserl, through the theses on analogical ap-presentation and inter-subjective community.⁷

If we consider carefully André Scrima’s approach, we will also note a phenomenological reduction. The second chapter of the *Anthropology*, titled “Theological and Anthropological Apophaticism,” proposes a spiritual path in which a being enters into “a concrete, living, and conscious relationship with God.”⁸ This path is in fact a negation that involves three spiritual steps: the dialectical and conceptual apophatic theology, with a careful look at Dionysius the Areopagite; an existential and aneidetic apoph-

6 See this edition, p. 70.

7 André Scrima mentions this solution, but he distances himself from it in his article, “Le nom-lieu de Dieu,” *Archivio di Filosofia*, Istituto di Studi Filosofici, Roma, 1969, p. 216.

8 See this edition, p. 50.

asis that leads, by a purification of the mind, to the discovery of the inner prayer; and, finally, a deification through the uncreated divine energies, deification which, at the end of a spiritual path, reveals the difference between the ever-unknown divine essence and the divine energy, which is communicable and participatory. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is absolutely legitimate to see in the intellectual ascesis, which is the requested attitude on this path, a phenomenological reduction, at the end of which apophaticism becomes, in the author's words, "a pneumatic realism, equally distanced from sterile psychology and the subtleties of discursive intellectualism."⁹ There are two essential aspects here: first, the notion of realism, which marks by itself the certainty of the object of the search, that is the very end of the itinerary; then, the qualification of "pneumatic," a path which gives the foundation to the objectivity of the discovery in the participation of man to the Holy Spirit, including the approach in the lineage of a Christian tradition whose genealogy André Scrima has drawn in a few fundamental texts. I consider here two of his writings about the Orthodox monastic tradition,¹⁰ but also his first study published in the West in 1958, which was in true unison with and also a direct echo of the spiritual meditation of the group at the Antim Monastery.¹¹ In these three texts and in many others that followed, André

9 See this edition, pp. 71–72.

10 "Le monachisme orthodoxe: histoire, traditions, spiritualité," a text written in 1961–1962; "Aperçus sur l'hésychasme," a course delivered at the Department of Theology of the University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon, in 1970–1971, published in André Scrima, *Despre isihasm (On Hesychasm)*, pp. 23–151.

11 "L'Avènement philocalique dans l'orthodoxie roumaine," *Istina*, 1958, no. 3 and 4, pp. 295–328 and 443–475. Also in André Scrima, *Ortodoxia și încercarea comunismului (Orthodoxy and the Trial of Communism)*.

Scrima outlined the consequences of this phenomenological reduction: with the help of a few favorite themes which constitute points of support in his attempt to understand his mysterious theandric vocation, man is called to an encounter with God in the depths of his person; he is called to living the deification (*théosis*) spoken of by St. Symeon the New Theologian.

The *Apophatic Anthropology*, written in 1951–1952, was never finished. In it, Scrima already outlined a conception of man's deification by the supreme pneumatic experience of the uncreated light, in which André Scrima saw an *actual* transformation of man in the Holy Spirit. In the words of St. Maximus the Confessor, we can say that “a human being, remaining fully human, soul and body, according to nature, has fully become God, soul and body, according to grace.”¹² Knowledge of self requires from man a true “mystagogy,” which would allow him to commit himself to the path that leads to the depth that is inside himself, where, in the words of Tauler, “always coming above itself and ceasing to be what it used to be, our true being beholds itself as dressed by the form and face of God.” André Scrima believes that ontological theocentrism represents the constitutive category of the human creature. An anthropology that does not admit this, he notes, “would be condemned to end sooner or later in the postulation of human “naturalism” and then in man's de-centering.”¹³

Thus, the experience of the Spirit is that which, at the end of this phenomenological reduction, guarantees knowledge of the world, the inter-subjective rapports and the understanding of history, as kingdoms for the manifestation of the Spirit. Thus, human intellect is called to

12 Cited by A. Scrima in “Tradiția isihastă” (“The Hesychast Tradition”), in *Despre isihasm (On Hesychasm)*, p. 218.

13 See this edition, pp. 115–116.

identify and interpret, in the continuity of a tradition, the signs of the Spirit in the world as points of support for the itinerary of the intellect in God and the path for its deification.

Vlad Alexandrescu

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This volume brings together André Scrima's unfinished work, *The Apophatic Anthropology*, and a few of his articles on Orthodoxy written before his departure from Romania (November 28, 1956). As mentioned in the Romanian edition, the manuscript of the *Apophatic Anthropology*, dated 1951–1952, covers only the first chapters out of the nine which were contained in the project.

The articles from the second part of this edition, under the title *Texts from the Antim Monastery*, were published in Romanian in André Scrima's *Ortodoxia și încercarea comunismului*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2008.

The footnotes belong to André Scrima, unless otherwise noted. The endnotes belong to the translator.

I am grateful to Vlad Alexandrescu for the opportunity to work on this volume. I am also thankful to Bogdan Bucur, Dragoș Giulea, and Vlad Niculescu, who revised various parts of the translation. I am especially indebted to Vlad Niculescu, who encouraged and supported me throughout this process.

Octavian Gabor

THE APOPHATIC ANTHROPOLOGY

THE PLAN OF THE PROJECT

- I. *Introduction*: The philosophical and theological significance of anthropology
- II. *Theological and Anthropological Apophaticism*:
 1. The large meaning of apophatic theology—expression of the relation between the uncreated and the created and consequence of the incognoscibility of the absolute.
 2. The ontological reality of apophaticism—the essential value of the distinction between substance and energy. Epektasis.
 3. The foundations of the anthropological apophaticism: man, as created god, will comport, at his level, apophatic qualifications. The deiform essence of man, as it is expressed in the notions of the image and likeness.
 4. The centrality of the Chalcedon dogma: the possibility that was initially given to man to communicate with God finds its plenary accomplishment in the theandricity of Jesus Christ. “Our hidden person with Jesus Christ in God.” Deification communicates apophatic data to the human being also.
 5. The distinction between substance and energy applied to man (Bulgakov in *St. Gregory Palamas*). It leads to determining the profoundness of man, to the notion of “person.”
- III. *The Problem of the Personality*: Personality described as profound subject, as ultimate reality,

as the Image of God in man. Conscience and freedom as elements of a person. However, the human hypostasis does not exhaust (as the Divine one) God's Image in man; thus, research leads necessarily to an ineffable ontic nucleus, to "*homo absconditus*."

- IV. *Homo Absconditus*: The determinations of "*homo absconditus*" with the same apophatic qualifications as *Deus absconditus*: transcendent and yet immanent, hidden and yet revealed in its manifestations (analogy as substance and energy). The place of "the hidden man" is "*cor absconditum*"—a true mystical time of man.
- V. *Cor absconditum*: The pneumatic center of being. Its metaphysical dynamism, its antinomic definitions (given also in the good or bad becoming of man and of God). The paradoxical situation of the heart: part and whole, because it is a center, and the center contains essentiality (the kingdom of God is here). The problem of the Name.
- VI. *Mens*: The mind of the apophatic man. The coordinates of profound knowledge: knowledge-love. The steps of light. The relation between the mind and the heart.
- VII. *The Man-Temple*: The anthropological value of the liturgy. St. Maximus's mystagogy: the anaphora, the heart of the liturgy. The mystical-sacramental parallelism. Man, a sabbatical being. The inner liturgy as form of existence of the apophatic man.
- VIII. *I and Thou*: The supra-personal character of the human person: its accomplishment rests only in communion with another person. Love as creative function of personality (Madinier). Life as liturgy.
- IX. *Conclusions*.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The glory of man rests in investigating things

(Proverbs 25:2)ⁱⁱ

1. Immanent Revelations

Without a doubt, the problem of man is the central question of our time. This truth can never be repeated enough. Uttered in this way, in the stringency of its obviousness, it may appear as a common place, just as all fundamental truths. As a consequence, its essential content could be ignored. There is nothing more terrible than a common place that hides profound, significant realities under the veil of banality. These realities are callings for an understanding of the signs of the time. From this point of view, one can say that each evidence is a cryptogram, a mystery that wants to be resolved, and only our fear and refusal to encounter the mysteries at their level transform them instantaneously in common places that no longer deserve the attention of a clear understanding.

However, there are times when history takes it upon itself to break the conspiracy of apathy woven around simple evidences. Then, these humble and humbled truths appear before us as messages which resound serious and profound meanings. Man is at the center of reality: these words have been uttered during so many ages, in so many places, and with so many meanings that, if they were said once again in our days, not much would be added to their understanding or misunderstanding. Still, the history of our days brings forward this old yet new truth more powerfully than before: it unveils it explosively. One may almost say that history reveals it to us. Indeed, uncovering man's centrality within cosmos and history resembles a revelation that history itself marks powerfully in its catastrophic rhythms of its recent period.

History places man at the center of its dynamism, acting and also bearing the meanings of its ample avatars.

Thus, man's centrality resembles a revelation especially today, because man has now a different configuration than the man of the past; he is placed on much deeper ontological levels. It has been shown that if man can claim for himself the supreme dignity of a living thing, it is not because of the worth of his external actions (history shattered them so many times and so easily!). Nothing that has to do with the universe of man's external achievements can aspire to eternity, can pass the test of time, and, after all, can constitute the foundation of the authentic preeminence of man in the universe. There is only one reason why man is entitled to claim that he is the center of reality: this is because he carries within his metaphysical depths the meaning of the entire existence, because he holds the stamp of authenticity or falsity in the order of creation. It is the *recent* times that brought to light the meaning and the metaphysical function of man; this is the main message of contemporary history. After so many periods of oscillations and hesitations, man's spiritual being is clearly affirmed today by the thinking of the age. This would still not be sufficient: there have always been thinkers who defended man's spirituality, and there will also be admirable thinkers who will deny it until the end of the world—and especially at that time. Furthermore, the spiritual, metaphysical meaning of the being of man is offered at the level of historic becoming. Of course, this truth is not presented in its nakedness, to make it accessible to the first comer. Such truth is always suspicious: it resembles a truism too much.

One should not forget that, if any truth is generally a symbol, or at least an indication, an intention toward something, then the data and the events of history are living symbols, geometrical places of God's intentions concerning the world. Thus, even in this case of careful analysis of the meaning of contemporary history—or especially in this case—there is need for a work of interpreting and uncovering the meanings of historical facts. A simple enumeration of them would not be sufficient—it would

even be inappropriate. However, if indicating certain cardinal meanings of history is simpler today, if its major coordinates are more perceivable than in the past, this is because history has become more transparent, the symbolic sense of its unfolding is more visible, and history converges toward man as toward its own spiritual center (in the created order)—toward a profound man, placed at the limit zones of his being, where he converges toward God and is articulated by Him.

But what happened and what is happening truly? Is it because we are entitled to see events making their appearance on the dimensions of contemporary history, events using meanings that are qualitatively different from those in the past and dependent on man's own metaphysical universe? What valid expression can the events of the external world find so that they are relevant for the understanding of the human being's central role in history?

Beyond all the abuses and compromises that it has experienced, the term "crisis" remains the most indicative for defining the historical moment that has remained unchained for a very long time. During this interval which begins, practically speaking, with the Renaissance, any time a conscience wakes up in the middle of anxiety or, depending on the case, of euphoria, that age is experienced as one of crisis. The history of thought is a witness to an identity of sensibility that brings Pascal and Nietzsche or Kierkegaard and Spengler in the same family, beyond the categorical external differentiations. Such a persistency in defining the situation of our history must give food for thought. For what is really a crisis? A crisis is a *judgment*, a sentence uttered in a certain fashion.

The etymology of the word (*krísis*) as well as an analysis that brings it to its limit show us that *crisis* is a judgment, because the highest crisis that can be imagined is the day of absolute penitence, the Final Judgment. In this way, when applied to our times, the meaning of the notion of crisis shows forth clearly that it is a judgment on all levels, social, ethical, and spiritual. Of course, this judg-

ment is first and foremost on man: he is the one judged for his deeds.

Anytime these deeds become faulty, determine disastrous consequences, or hinder the normal development of the life of humanity, man is judged and condemned through his very acts, regardless of whether he is or not aware of it.

Since we can notice the elements that confer to contemporary history the character of spiritual crisis in an unprecedented manner, there is no need for an exhaustive analysis of the naked facts of history. What is important for our research is the tendency that permeates all these facts and which is expressed in a dialectic human-cosmos, from where history extracts its being. This dialectic could be thus expressed in its aspect of a crisis: man is more and more dehumanized, he loses the awareness of his spiritual centrality in the universe and, paradoxically at the same time, makes a titanic, demiurgic, and often unconscious effort to humanize history and the cosmos.

Truly speaking, this effort is not specific only to our times, especially in regard to the second moment of this dialectical move, the action of humanizing the cosmos. On the contrary, the mission and the essential vocation of man as the main agent of the transfiguration of the universe must be seen in this latter action. The entire world was offered to man for work and completion. Man had to change it according to his own image, which mysteriously is an archetype of cosmos itself. Humanized, the world had to be offered to the Creator whose image man was himself.ⁱⁱⁱ The catastrophe of sin came into the picture, and thus the history of man's tribulations started. The human being lost the stability of his ontological regime and began to change from age to age becoming one by one "old" or "new," "antique" or "modern."

However, during these changes, the human being kept a contact with his interiority and his eternity, and this made him be "a human." Today (and when we say "today" we consider a contemporaneity which has lasted for a few

centuries in its essential lines), this contact diminished. Man throws himself more and more outside, externalizes more and more, and loses his spiritual center and his integrity. Human life is emptied of the organic structure proper to man as spiritual being and tries to be saved in an artificial organization which proceeds from the outside to the inside. But in this fashion, the specificity of the human being, which is conferred by the transcendent order with which he is interiorly articulated, is ignored and neglected, man dries, and the process of dehumanization is accomplished.

Considered only in this aspect, the crisis of contemporary man is not yet perceived in its essence. The data above describes the external manifestation of a profound dislocation, a derogation produced at the still interior level of being. In order to make a step forward toward grasping his cause, we must emphasize an element which conditions the crisis of our days from its very beginning: the action of dehumanization of modern man did not appear spontaneously. On the contrary, we could say that it is no more than the consequence and the punishment of an initial sin committed by man, sin that consisted paradoxically in the very tendency of being "only a man," being "man purely and simply," remaining "natural man" while dismissing everything that is supernatural. The historical moment of this sin can be easily identified, even if the sin that we discuss is coextensive with human history. It is no other than the form of persistency in time of the original sin: man's attempt to become God with his own powers (and, most of the times, even with the gracious help coming from the devil), and not by his Creator. Thus, the only serious problem of the history of humanity has been and will remain the abolishment of the original sin. Again, this is why only Christianity can offer the real conditions for man's fulfillment, for it brought to the world the abolition of the original sin as an indispensable premise for the renewal of the human being.

However, as we said above, even if this human sin par excellence (or, better said, non-human)^{iv} is present throughout history and stays at the basis of all great human collapses, there still are moments in which it has a weaker or more acute presence in the world. During certain periods, in a conscientious and fruitful effort, the entire humanity raises in solidarity to a great work of salvation: the Christian centuries of history stand as witness. In other eras, though, humankind tries a recrudescence of the vanity of laic pseudo-deification outside of God, when man hypostasizes his being as absolute value, as final purpose, beyond which he no longer recognizes anyone and anything. This is then what is hidden under the process of dehumanization that man suffers today: man is dehumanized and disintegrated precisely because he lost the spiritual center, necessarily situated outside of him and above him, precisely because he tried to narrow himself only to what he considered limits of his "pure" human nature, ignoring and despising the supernatural which is the only one that gives the basis to the natural and sustains it.

From the precise moment when modern humanity situated man in the center of reality (moment that can be generally assimilated to the Renaissance, and to which we will return), history lives in an anthropocentric existential reign. But we should be well understood concerning this type of anthropocentrism. The man placed today in the heart of history is no longer the profoundly human one, aware of his hierarchical situation in the world and of his ontological dependence on his Creator (such dependence is far from annihilating him; instead, it raises him to his proper order and accentuates his natural rights as master of creation). The contemporary crisis has at its center a human type which, repeating throughout centuries the original sin and falling again to the temptation of the deceiver, has broken its connection with the transcendent and now tries, wittingly or unwittingly, to usurp its prerogatives and to obtain a deification by exterior efforts. Deification is perceived as excess of possession and natural

power, while in reality it is a supernatural gift, offered to the efforts of the inner being, efforts enlighten by love. At the core, the contemporary anthropocentrism is a great illusion: and, as any illusion, it hides a great sadness that started to transpire in the world, above all the noises of an artificial exultation.

The dominant feature of the present crisis must be seen in this “autarchy of the immanent.” A human being is eternally tempted to try the realization of an absolute autonomy, which becomes, after all, a revolt against the Creator. Of course, even with such an erroneous claim, a positive significance still emerges: beyond all the monstrosities and perversions of a sinful act, man’s aspiration to hypostasize in God remains as a testimony for the profound kinship between man and God. Only man can be tempted to become God because this potentiality has been inscribed by the Creator Himself only in his being. But it must be that the deification of a human being is accomplished in God and not outside of Him or against Him; in this final tentative, next to the abject logical error that establishes it, there is also a clear destructive anger against man. When the tempter promises man deification without God, the accuser tends to destroy man at the moment when he detaches from the source of Life, since he is deprived of any resources of metaphysical resistance, reduced to his proper nothingness before the Nothingness.

From the beginning of the present crisis, one can identify several dialectical moments of its development, moments inscribed in as many well defined phases of history, for, as we said above, history is revealed more and more clearly today as being the place of the explanation for man’s profound drama.

In a first moment, intoxicated with the creative potentialities of the Spirit that is conscious of his ontological preeminence, man imagines that he can establish an order in the world that is proper to human reason. The order is brought forward as serving supreme values. This could be

the classical moment of culture, which Maritain^v calls also "the moment of Christian naturalism."¹

However, not long could pass before man would acknowledge that a culture separated from the supernatural order is obligated to take position against itself: this is the second moment, the one of positivist exaltation of nature, of rationalist "liberation" of man, when he begins to think of himself as a small scientist god, having in view better mastering the earth and ensuring his earthly comfort. The foolish 19th century is the expression of this moment. "I have dressed in God, it is more convenient,"^{vi} Nietzsche said, denouncing the hidden disease of last century's bourgeois civilization.

Finally, in a third moment, necessarily resulting from the previous two, man takes one further step toward the accomplishment of his evil autonomy: he establishes himself decisively as his final purpose and enters into an atheistic fight with God, nature, and man by constructing a presupposed new humanity out of the modern bits of the oldest sin.

During all these three moments (and especially during the last one), the authentic human nature is ignored, the concrete, particular man suffers violence in the name of the abstract, and the material forces, exacerbated by the individual and by the community, get to dominate and enslave the being that created or directed them. Desolation, depression, and confusion, which irrupted massively in the world, stem from here.

However, even if we may be tempted to do so, let us not blame too easily certain aspects of contemporary civilization, or even civilization as a whole. In their harmful effects, technical advances, mechanization, and science can only be projections of a more profound spiritual evil that came to be in man's intimacy. Great events take place first

1 J. Maritain: *Religion et culture*, p. 35.

in the order of spirit and only afterwards find the external expression in history. Today, man disintegrates primordially in his inner, spiritual being, which has departed from its ontological Principle; even the so-called "spiritual" products of modern culture fatally wear the stamp of this metaphysical disorientation of being. The positive use of some of the realities mentioned above, even if they have a reputation for being harmful, depends on the spiritual recovery of man.

It goes without saying that a historical crisis as large as the one we discuss does not come without certain greatness, even if it is only the poor human greatness of tragedy.

The being of man and the being of history are profoundly engaged in the convulsions that announce the coming of a new world out of the enigmatic chrysalides of the century. Without a doubt, it would be audacious to try to describe its future configuration, even if it is legitimate when you remain in the light of superior clarities and certitudes. What can be done, however, and what you are obligated to do is to *understand* the present moment and its significance and thus to organize your sympathies, antipathies, and even your future action accordingly.

Practically speaking, this means to formulate certain conclusions in which you grasp, as much as possible, the profound determinants of the discussed crisis. Its meaning will be implicitly comprised in these coordinates.

The unilateral comprehension is not authentic. Desiring to see only the negative aspects, the failures, and the disasters of the historical moment we live shows at least a superficial understanding. In the downfalls that surround us, in the general anxiety and contraction, one can also perceive quite clearly also the message of a certain liberation, the cadences of the historical annihilation of older sins, as well as many promises of man's deepening within himself and in the eternal reality. This is why while judging the present historical moment we also have to emphasize both its positive and negative aspects, with the same

vigor, just as they appear from the large drama of today's man. In its essence, the contemporary crisis is the crisis of man: this is the first conclusion that appears clearly. Man can be determined either by God or by "the world" (better said, by the worldly): you must choose. The "humanist" temptation, dating from Renaissance, opted for a humanism separated from Incarnation, which means for a pseudo-humanism torn initially by an internal fatal contradiction, for one cannot begin an image^{vii} and a plenary realization of the human being outside of the Incarnation, the only one who restituted the eternal image of man to the world. All the negative consequences of the present evil were contained in germ in this initial error. The successive failures appearing during the last centuries are only man's inability to accomplish himself when using any dimensions but spiritual, which were discovered once for all in Incarnation.

History became a history of man's failures, the failures of one type of man. It is undeniable that the last eras' accumulation of catastrophes and crises on all the plans of reality expresses the missing of the seemingly grand but in fact too human and thus petty aspiration of self-deification of man according to some immanent values. The negative sense of the present crisis rests in this: an inexorable falling of all past, present, and future attempts to illegitimately raise man over man's condition, bringing about disasters as large as the audacities were more immensurable.

However, in the very substance of the present evil, as we understood it above, one can suspect certain positive aspects, some arising indirectly out of the action of evil, others representing the creative contribution of man, which is soon to appear always when the human being engages an experience profoundly and fully.

Without a doubt, any disintegration of historical forms in which man was accustomed to lead his existence and organize more or less successfully the premises of his accomplishment in this life and, sometimes, in the one beyond, must be felt as a great hit, for he thus perceives

himself all of a sudden without the help of various temporal aids which supported him to maintain the life of spirit to a certain level. This loss is even more serious when the rhythm of disintegration is more and more accelerated. However, from another perspective, such an experience must be seen as a great relief, for the profound life of man is thus liberated from the terrible heaviness of abuses and impostures which have tainted for so long a spiritually disoriented world. The collapse of so many idols, which actually represented the hypostatization of the external, material aspects of the human being, led imperceptibly to the necessity to consider more attentively and more seriously the inner universe of man: today, one suspects that there are unfathomable depths in him which were neglected or even ignored when our attention was fixed on and captivated by the false radiance of the external man.

The process of internalizing being was somewhat necessarily implied by the immanent tendency of modern man. Indeed, when he looks back at himself, focusing on himself and his strictly human universe, man eventually suffers a powerful movement toward introspection that is proper to the spirit, even against his will. He begins to go deeper within himself, even if the purpose was not to find God there. In this way, the quantity of self-consciousness in our world increases. Even if man is turning the gaze from true spirituality, even if the exterior universe no longer appears to him as the place of symbolical meanings, but only the occasion to accomplish some external comfort and welfare, however, in the process of profane internalization, the universe of immanence opens its underground doors. Man discovers there that his profound being is bathed in spirit, that his essential structure is spiritual. In this way, the movement towards his depths, which began strictly subjectively, discovers to science, art, and action, in a word, to the entire human nature, its objective-spiritual condition. From its beginning, modern age was constituted into a "reflexive ego." There, man drew his fundamen-

tal values from his reflection on himself, within his psychological ego. Descartes could be considered the initiator of this style, with his “*cogito ergo sum*”: existence itself was inferred from knowing man’s psychological being. Of course, this “ego” of reflexive analysis and of psychological introversion—still belonging, after all, to the outer being—was supposed to be overcome in the direction of the more pronounced deepening: in fact, as man moved away from his genuine spirituality, the need for it was more acutely resented; as the being lost its external freedom, becoming thus the slave of blind forces and of natural necessities, the exigency of interior freedom became more imperative. Thus, beyond the interior inferno of the man left prey to himself, his true image started to surge from the ultimate depths of his being as autonomous, free, non-captive and inexhaustible to rational concepts, and ineffable, for it is directly articulated with the depths of God. Next to all losses and confusions, all tears and crushes coming from man’s derogation from his condition of theonomous being, we must also mention these positive aspects of the contemporary historical moment through which an increase in the knowledge of man and of the creation can be realized. Thus the cause of the spirit is served, so that the results obtained on this painful road could be incorporated to our substance in a fecund way.

The exceptional significance of the historical process that we succinctly analyzed above rests in having determined, in its intimate mechanism, the human being’s engagement into a personal dialectic with his own image. The development of the eternal image of man, with which he must enter eternity, is that which activates the dynamism of the history of humanity from its beginning, from the very moment when man saw his darkened image following what happened under the tree of knowledge. In the center of history, the Savior’s Incarnation remains the act of plenary restitution of the eternal image of man: from now on, mankind had only to keep the path that He

mapped in order to thus reach the depths of its being and the heights of Divine Nature.

This is such a grand perspective that it may seem incomprehensible how man, instead of following it incessantly throughout his history, has not hesitated and still does not hesitate today to renounce it and to substitute it with crooked paths leading to hallucinating imaginations of his own nothingness. Indeed, this would be incomprehensible if we did not consider that even derogation and apostasy serve the final triumph of truth, mystically and beyond our will. Even so, this does not cancel, of course, our personal responsibility and guilt.

However, even during the so frequent periods of its error, the history of humanity is governed by its own idea about man. It is a privilege of our reflexive intelligence to be able to contemplate our image in the more or less accurate and clean mirror of self-consciousness: any historical era has such a consciousness that traverses all ramifications of its spiritual or material activity, amalgamating and elaborating in them and through them a certain image of man, dominating the respective historical phenomenon.

The action and life of humanity in the vastness of its historical unfolding depend on the image we have of our nature and on our nature itself. Of course, this image appears with sufficient clarity only in the thinking of some representative spirits, but it continues to be present, albeit indistinctly and at times unwittingly, in the large unanimous mass of people (or especially here), charged with so much energy and plastic efficiency that it determines the configuration and the becoming of all great cultural, social, or political activities of an era. It is a reality so powerful and so consistent to the human image that, even if a period is dominated by a false image of the human being, it still gives birth to concrete and living lies, which humanity must face as if they were truths.

There is then a certain anthropological vision in the center of history: the historical efforts are consubstantial to the effort of establishing a type of man; the history's

failures are the failures of an unfulfilled image of man; the history's victories are the victories of the fashioning of a living and authentic image of man. We will discover that this truth is offered clearly to our understanding only in researching the fruit of philosophical thought over centuries: this is nothing but a large anthropological conception, which is involved in the system at times, is presented improperly at other times, but it at all times command the action of coagulating philosophical speculation. This is even more important if we consider that, beyond the personal composition, the thinker mirrors, in fact, a concrete state (the most concrete because it is the most profound) of his era, which his sensitivity noticed and formulated: in a second movement, he returned it crystalized to his own environment, provoking at times actions and reactions completely unexpected in relation to the presupposed innocent aspect of any philosophical system. They proved in this way how justified and alive their vision was. From this point of view, it could be said that the philosophers (this term is more comprehensive than it can be suspected in current use: any profound man of history is a philosopher) are the great prophets and the great holders of responsibility. Thus, there is nothing more beneficial for our research than the description of the way in which man was reflected in man's conscience. The philosophical significance of anthropology will be clearly drawn from every step of this research.

2. Man's Image in the Conscience of Humanity

The mirror of human conscience has never reflected a simple image of man: he has always had a double portrait. Depending on the position of reflexive understanding, man was considered from above or from below: from God and the spiritual world, or from the cosmic, material, and unconscious forces that are also rooted in his essence. Following an oscillating logic—and its oscillating character is significant—the focus fell on spirit or matter, on soul or body, on the supernatural or the natural, by turn. This

actually emphasizes a concrete polar structure of being: man is body and soul, matter and spirit from the beginning, and he is so in a sense that goes beyond a simple polarization of his existence. The double composition of his being is equivalent to a being-on-a-cross (and not to a duality) that is essential to the human condition. Initially, man is constituted on these two ontological dimensions as if on the two arms of a cross, offered to man from the beginning together with his being. He bears this cross as the seal of his glory and misery: man is both entirely body and soul and, at the same time, he feels he is divided to the point of laceration between them.^{viii}

Philosophical thinking acknowledged this ontological *status* of a human being as his fundamental problem. History of philosophy can be defined by a perpetual bipolar tension between soul and body, between Spirit and non-spirit (this includes nature and its life because they are deprived of their own light and are dominated by the spirit). This tension described a “*via crucis*” of the human mind, which is parallel to the thorny path of being-on-a cross of its entire being.

Antique as the world, old as being, immemorial as man, the conscience of this cardinal tension finds its clear and precise expression in the Greek philosophy for the first time, historically speaking. The dominant philosophical attitudes of the modern world were established coming out of the aura of ancient philosophy, and they will no longer experience a major variation.

One can configure a durable philosophical typology here. It became established and continues to be established over centuries as the perennial bed of the spirit, directing between its walls the great historical river of its conceptions. The problem of man rests in the center of this typology. It is after all an anthropological typology. The oldest image of man presented in Greek philosophy is “*homo platonicus*.” The old and mysterious understandings about man, coming from the Presocratics, Socrates himself, and the Orphic mysteries, merge in this man in a

fecund synthesis, equal to a re-creation. At the beginning (even before Plato), thinking had discovered itself: the first authentic revolution in the history of humanity had taken place. Man, focused on natural existence from birth, in the unfolding of his entire life, had discovered the element that gave him power over nature and moved him into a world that he had not suspected. From this moment, the nostalgia for this world will govern his soul: Greek philosophy discovered the *logos*. Self-conscience performed a true ontological mutation: it passed from a predominantly natural and material regime to a predominantly creative and spiritual one, through which man's spiritual essence manifested itself. In order to pass from predominance to supremacy and even to exclusivism (of course, in the theoretical and doctrinal order), only one other step was needed. Plato took it; it was a huge step that transported the ontological core of the human being from the material earth to the ideal sky. Platonic anthropology was originally constituted under the sign of a dualism with the tonic accent on spirit.

As a consequence, philosophy became for Plato an art of retiring thinking within itself: the (rational) Spirit deliberately absorbs the entire life or, at least, opposes it decidedly. At the origins of this dualism we find the old Orphic principle of the mortal weight of the body: *soma—séma*. The active, generating, and living principle is only the Spirit. It creates even the body in which it will dwell.

In itself, the body is nothing; its own life is inexistent. The body, as the entire material reality to which it belongs, is only a projection, an "object," a residue of the spiritual activity.² The soul and the body together, as they are in concrete reality, form a hybrid couple only, in which the life of the body, being fixed in mechanized matter, will only be illusory and inexplicable, while the life of

2 L. Robin. *Platon*. Paris, 1935, p. 269.

the soul will be the activity that generates Ideas. The Idea is equal to supreme value and authentic life: only by participating in it, the soul can operate the passing to the biological life of the body via a mathematic and mechanic process.³ As the mark of its noble origin, the soul always maintains the aspiration to leave the earthly prison and to return to the solar world of ideas: “to philosophize is to learn to die.”^{ix} The antagonism between the rational life of the soul and irrational existence is irreducible.

There is something that remains always valid in Platonic anthropology because it is expressed with prophetic accents, which make him a pneumatophore. This is the clear and brilliant affirmation of the autonomy and preeminence of the spirit; it is the celebration of the elevation of the soul above passing things, toward that which lives in eternity; together with this, it is also the inheritance of a series of quasi-scientific data about the structure of being (as, for example, the affirmation of the *nous* and of everything that refers to it), data that is integrated into human thought for good.

Next to these positive permanent aspects, “*homo platonius*” exhibits some features that reveal an inner evil that makes his being suffer and that needs to be signaled. In Platonic anthropology, this evil is provoked by the primary division of being. “*Homo platonius*” is torn in two heterogeneous parts: the vital part that the spirit absorbs and denies at the same time, and the part characteristic to the spirit, the seat of Ideas. At the end, this seat will return into the primordial Unity, where it will finally be absorbed as well. The existential individuality of a human being is annihilated, practically speaking: a kingdom divided interiorly cannot endure. The body *and* the soul, so both elements of the human composite (so, as a consequence, the human composite itself), proved to be deprived of the on-

3 *Timaeus* 53a; 59.

tological lest given by their viable unity in man's personality. Reality is situated on the plan of impersonal existence, where even the personal spirit melts in the abstract unity of the universal spirit, as Plotinus, as an orthodox Platonist, will show. In this way, of course, one would never grasp the mystery of otherness, of the existence of a "you" outside of you, of a real and concrete "you," worth knowing and loving, without whom even the spirit's existence is only an immense and sorrowful void.

From this angle, Platonic anthropology is revealed as structurally divergent to the Christian view of man. Christianity brings a great novelty (which invokes the character of an annunciation) with the message that there is an eternal destination for the entire human, body and soul. This is a revolutionary idea (perhaps the only one truly revolutionary in history), and it could not and cannot be established unless it actively combats the ancient Platonic idealism with its modern avatars. Beyond all the affinities of sensibilities that tend with equal sincerity toward the purity of spiritual being, there is an essential incongruity between Christianity and Platonism, often unsuspected. This makes it impossible speaking of the "Platonism of the Fathers" unless it is with a very general and external meaning. Nothing is more opposed to "*homo platonius*" than the spiritual man of Christianity. It is true, however, that Platonic anthropology introduces a kind of man very close to truth, who will discover his fulfillment in Christianity. Compared to the fight between spirit and matter that tore this Platonic man, Christianity will bring the demolition of the wall between them and their reconciliation in an encompassing resurrection of the human nature in Christ Jesus, "who united those which were very far away one from the other."⁴

4 Hesychius of Sinai, *Suta II despre trezvie (On Watchfulness)*, ch. 82, *Romanian Philokalia*, vol IV.

The other image of man brought forward by ancient thought is "*homo aristotelicus*"; together with "*homo platonius*," it forms the permanent poles between which human thinking will oscillate until our days, in various forms, describing its essential rhythms. Ancient philosophy and, we could say, perennial philosophy defined their major modalities in the Platonic moment and the Aristotelian moment; this is why there is a dialectical relation of complementarity but also of opposition between these two moments. Aristotelian metaphysics was constituted in opposition with Platonic philosophy; the respective anthropologies will also be affected by this opposition. Apparently, "*homo aristotelicus*" is more balanced than the precedent Platonic one: there is no longer any deadly dehiscence of the human composite transpiring through his being, there is no suffering out of the awareness that he is exiled on earth from heavens.

The Aristotelian man is indeed more at peace with himself and with the world as it is; however, he arrived here by abandoning in part his spiritual preeminence and integrating decidedly the order of the spirit in the natural order. "The soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body."⁵

For Aristotle, the spirit becomes a nature in the "physical" sense (of *physis*). The path toward the domination of a naturalist tendency over a metaphysical one was thus opened. "*Homo platonius*" was articulated at any moment with the order of the spirit, on the line of some inner valences: God was understood and loved from within. Contrary to this, Aristotle places being on the respec-

5 Aristotle, *De anima*. II.2, 414a20, in M. de Corte, "Anthropologie platonicienne et aristotélicienne," *Etudes Carmélitaines*, vol I, 1938, p. 74. (Translator's note: I used J. A. Smith's translation in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (1984), edited by Jonathan Barnes).

tive steps of a hierarchy disposed exteriorly, imitating the configuration of some naturalist hierarchy. The Stagirite philosopher is dominated by a "superstitious veneration for the physical world."⁶

On the top of this hierarchy, Aristotle no longer sees the Platonic "Good and Beautiful," but the "unmoved mover"; this term is not adventitious. One could say that, with Aristotle, human intelligence begins its "technical" phase of scientific and rational application on outer nature, acting on it by outer means. Thus, from the Aristotelian "unmoved mover" until the "moved movers" of technical eras, a similar, predominantly naturalist, philosophical conception governs and directs man's efforts. However, the great danger for the Aristotelian man is clearly expressed in his very definition. "Man is a rational animal": the central formula of Aristotelian anthropology opens a double perspective on the insufficiency of the Stagirite vision. First, as we saw above, a human being is thus definitively engaged in the strictly natural order ("man is an animal"). The possibilities to ontologically transmute man in a non-worldly world are very limited, if not fully suspended.

Secondly, the specificity of a human being, being identified in reason ("rational animal"), finds in this definition a double, almost equivocal expression. Reason remains however too exterior to the animal; thus, instead of emphasizing the essential heterogeneity between man and animal, the Aristotelian formula succeeds rather in limiting and leaving in the shadow the true levels specifically human of a human being. Human reason, not having direct access to the superior realities that metaphysically establish it, will only be able to know them analogically, starting from knowledge of the inferior data and only due to this knowledge. However, since man will never be con-

6 L. Brunschwig: *L'humanisme de l'Occident*, p. 233.

tent with fragments of relative knowledge, he is fatally pushed to hypostasize in absolute truths the elaborations of his own reason. The Promethean audacities of human mind, the action of “theomorphization” of immanent values, so frequent in the modern world, are governed by Aristotle rather than Plato.

After all, if Plato resolved the essential dualism of his man into a spiritualist monism in which being melted its personal existence, Aristotle tried to avoid this perspective by flattening his man, amputating some of his spiritual articulations and limiting his metaphysical horizon in favor of enriching his scientific naturalist horizon.

Of course, the insufficiencies and deficiencies of these two fundamental anthropologies of ancient philosophy have an explanation, even a necessary explanation, but it could not be grasped before Christianity. It consists in the reality of the original sin. The efforts of Greek thought could not of course go beyond the limits of Adam’s sin and thus realize the authentic, profound, and complete understanding of man. The Greek spirit was sufficiently great, though, to accept its own error, so to discover the significance of the original fall and to fully become Christian. In the process of Christianization of Greek philosophy, Platonic anthropology received with more openness and comprehension the Christian message than the Aristotelian one did, and thus its contribution was more valuable and more fecund.

However, in the history of human spirituality, there is a vigorous metaphysical vision that remained relatively identical with itself over time, proposing a penetrating and at times ampler anthropological conception than the one of Greek philosophy: it is Hindu metaphysics. Being less of a “religion” and almost not at all a “philosophy,”⁷

7 In order to properly define the nature of Hindu spirituality (we consider here the “orthodox” doctrine of the Vedas), the terms

Hindu doctrines are constituted as a “spiritual technique” exclusively centered on man. We would be entitled to expect that a vast and comprehensive anthropology would result from here. We may even think that this anthropology could be exhaustive in relation to the problems that concern man. However, it is not so. We could even say

“religion” and “philosophy” are not the most adequate. The Hindu vision lacks the precise conscience of the personal relationship between man and God in order to be a proper religion, as it also lacks the personalistic conception of these two terms of the relation (this is why it lacks a dramatic structure and an indispensable organic structure to any superior, so authentic, religion). The extreme-oriental doctrines accept even less the name of philosophy, which is an external occidental creation, with a rational structure and psychological nature. The term of “metaphysics” in a European sense is not different from philosophy, but it is only one branch of it, with the same rationalist basis. However, in the Far East, and especially in India, the spiritual effort’s main feature is that it goes beyond (at least in intention) the strictly rational (thus philosophical) order, trying to work into a “meta-physical” region, in an etymological sense (so beyond the realm of individual physical reality, in the area of “universal principles”); in order to arrive here, it employs a complex, psycho-physical spiritual technique which is not the expression of a religious attitude and even less of a philosophical one. Thus, it seems natural that “metaphysics” remains the most adequate term for defining the spirituality of the Far East. Again, we consider here only that which we could call the doctrinal nucleus of Hindu spirituality, so the doctrine of the Vedas; in the world of India there are many devotional attitudes that could be called “religious” in a generic sense; there are also Westerner philosophical systems that are shaped with Hindu material. Some of them are honorable (See S. Dasgupta: *Indian Idealism*, Cambridge, 1933 and D. Ranade, *Mysticism in Naharashtra: Indian Mysticism*, Poona, 1933); others are truly grotesque falsifications, such as theosophism, occultism, and even, lately, “traditionalism.”

that, from one perspective, the Brahman anthropology is more sterile than the one of Greek Antiquity, even if, as we said above, it is richer in experimental data about the profound levels of being (for India's attitude toward the spiritual order is inherently experimental). For the Eastern world—of course, we remain on the metaphysical plane—man's concrete existence with body and soul is not only the source of an ontological evil of being, but it purely and simply does not exist. Better said, it exists only as illusion (not as nothingness, but as illusion). There are no possibilities of salvation for the material order: the ritual assimilation of the organs and physiological functions with cosmic regions and rhythms has as purpose less conferring ontological reality to the body, but rather abolishing it by an adequate technique which melts it in the flux of spiritual life. This does not mean that the spirit enjoys a privileged state. It cannot accomplish a proper ontological plenitude either. Its position is even more dramatic, and this for two reasons. First, certain orthodox Hindu doctrines (Samkhya and Yoga) affirm that there are as many "selves," spirits-souls, as people. Every soul-spirit (*purusha*) is a completely isolated monad. The cosmos is populated by these *purushas*, eternally free, motionless monades among which there is no communication. Thus, a tragic and paradoxical conception about the spirit arises, where the spirit is "cut" not only from the phenomenal world, but also from the one of free spirits.⁸ Hindu metaphysics was bound to postulate the multiplicity of the *purushas*; if there were only one universal spirit, salvation would have been a much simpler problem; the first delivered man

8 See [R. Guénon]. *L'homme et son devenir selon le Vedanta. Introduction à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, *passim*; also, J. Maritain. "L'expérience mystique naturelle et le vide," *Etudes Carmélitaines*, October 1938.

would have brought about the deliverance of the entire human race.

But what is the salvation of one soul? Normally, in the metaphysical order, "deliverance" is the consequence of reaching a certain transcendence, different qualitatively (since it is transcendence) from its own essence. In Eastern metaphysics, though, things are different, and this is the second tragic moment of Hindu anthropology. The state of deliverance means acknowledging one's identity with the absolute spirit (*atman*), identity that subsists latently from eternity. The one who obtains the conscience of this identity is no longer man because the subject of this experience is not any specifically human, personal, and consistent nucleus. Going deep within itself, denying continuously its external coatings, a human being was destroyed and became something else. Is this "something else" Divinity? In a certain sense, it could be said so: the last depth of being is the Absolute, but an impersonal absolute. (Actually, it is impossible to have a concept of a personal God who would not demand the correlation with an also personal being, as the vision of an impersonal divinity will necessarily deny man's personality.) The fundamental error of Hindu anthropology (and this error constitutes its essence) is the identification of the "substantial" absolute proper to human spirit (which is created) and the divine absolute that is mirrored in it: the mirror and that which is perceived in the mirror are confused. This is why the same word, "*atman*," is used for designating the human self and the supreme Self; this is why the existence of Divinity in the Hindu doctrines is, if not directly denied (as in Samkhya, for example), at least neglected (as in Yoga, for example); this is why, finally, the dynamic and predominant element in Hindu metaphysics (either anthropology or theology) is not God, but man. The Indian spirituality always lived not under the sign of the God-man (even if only sensed), but of the "men-Gods." At the limit, it could be said that in the Hindu metaphysical universe, man is not re-solved, but dis-solved as man because of the

absence of a living and personal transcendence with which he could enter into communication manifesting grace. From here stems the impression of dryness, even of spiritual sterility, that transpires from the enrichment of knowledge about man with so many “technical” data, a fruit of the real and concrete experiences.⁹

Despite all the various attempts, stemming from various motives, to transplant Eastern conceptions into our

9 Of course, some corrections must be formulated here: 1) there are moments in the Eastern world when the breaths of the Spirit, which breathes wherever He wants, are quite palpable. This does not even need to be mentioned because God always answers to the efforts of His creation (regardless of who and where this creation is) when it searches Him fervently and sincerely. This search takes place very often in the East. Second, there must be some reservations in appreciating mystical language. Hindu metaphysics abounds in expressions about the states-limit, when the human words become necessarily insufficient and even equivocal.

However, if Hindu thinking (and in general equivalent Eastern modes of thinking) cannot be objectively accused of pantheism, it is difficult not to discover a metaphysical error in their depth, at least as dangerous as pantheism: anthropoteism. Indeed, to an extent, pantheism is heterogeneous to the Eastern spirit because this spirit is monist: the external “whole,” the cosmos, is an illusion and it cannot be identified with the Absolute. Man is essentially identical with God; he only needs to become aware of it, actualizing his identity by the spiritual technique that he has. If man is God, then a God that is personal, autonomous, infinitely superordinate to man can no longer be conceived; at his turn, man is open to the metaphysical deception that stems from the perspective of “you will be gods” (Genesis 3:5). For the Christian view, established on the reality contrary to theanthrophism (God made man by incarnation), Eastern spirituality hides a divergence and even a metaphysical hostility which has not yet said its last word, and this situates it at the antipode of the figure of Christ.

world, Europe remains structurally refractory to them and especially to the Hindu view (the most crystalized of all of them); this fact is the sign of a superior metaphysical vigor and lucidity, which is the result of a Christianization often more profound than one may suspect. Consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or involuntarily, Christianity became an *a priori* category of our world: Europe is more Christian than Europe itself thinks; at times, it is Christian even in its sins. European philosophical thinking followed another itinerary. The spiritual values of Christianity were added to the great Platonic and Aristotelian dimensions coming from the Ancient thought. These values should not be understood exclusively as religious elements, but rather as Christian data profoundly incorporated into a human being, to the point of becoming permanent categories of the human spirit. If European philosophy cannot be understood without relating it to Greek ancient philosophy, it reveals even less its authentic meanings if we do not take into account the Christian climate in which it has developed, even if it seems to ignore this climate and even reject it at times. Willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, starting with the incarnation of the Savior, mankind lives in an eon dominated by the Christian mode of existence, and it will be judged according to whether it assumed it or not.

The approach of European philosophy would essentially consist in the dialectical movement between the Platonic and Aristotelian visions of Ancient thought, on the one hand, and the new modes of thinking that Christianity conferred to human spirit, on the other hand. This dialectic finds its major expressions in some crucial points that correspond historically to eras with a well-outlined spirituality. The passing from one era to another is realized in a commutative act of the idea of man: slowly (but even abruptly and catastrophically at times), the image of man in the world's eyes is changed, and the history of mankind enters a new period dominated by a different image of man. Such moments can be identified in the an-

cient moment (mentioned above), the Scholastic one of the Middle Ages, the complex and deviated humanism of Renaissance, and, finally, the contemporary philosophical moment which, beyond the multiplicity of opinions and systems that goes to the point of confusion, remains interiorly determinate by the idealism of the previous century to such an extent that materialism, also strongly represented today, is just a hijacked or, better said, overturned idealism.

Medieval scholasticism finds its supreme, plenary, and solid expression in Thomism. It is quite difficult to grasp a Thomistic anthropology within St. Thomas' general philosophy, and for two reasons. First, Thomistic philosophy is intimately tied to a religious view, where man finds a non-philosophical solution on specifically religious dimensions. Second, considered as a "complete, unitary, and rationally independent system,"¹⁰ Thomistic philosophy gives surprisingly little space to man as such, to the complete man. He disappears beyond his acts and functions, especially the intellectual ones.¹¹ This is understandable if we consider that the Middle Ages are, philosophically speaking, dominated by Aristotelianism, a quite inhospitable system for the development of an integral doctrine about man. As a consequence, even if at times it successfully undertakes Aristotle's posthumous baptism, Thomism also appears in the likeness of Stagirite philosophy, as a vast system of synthesis, powerfully colored in a naturalist fashion. The Thomistic perspective appears to be rather a cosmocentric vision than an anthropological one. It tends to establish an order, a massive structure of existence. Reality is disposed in a system with hierarchical steps, where

10 R.P. de Tonquédec. "Faut-il revenir au thomisme?" *La Renaissance religieuse*, p. 150.

11 See R.P. de Tonquédec. *Critique de la connaissance*, Paris, 1929, especially ch. IV, sq. (*La comm. Intel.*).

every step is relatively independent but at the same time also subordinate to a superior step.

Man himself has his place on this scale, somewhere between angel and animal; his personality is exteriorly engaged to natural hierarchy. Reality is represented objectively and "from the outside." This is why we have the so rich device of logical demonstration that comes with its necessity. Thomism introduces the greatness of man from the outside; this greatness does not stem from a possibility of knowing life by using the depths of a human being, but rather from two other things: the objectively superior position man has when compared to the species remained below him and from his connection with the superior realities above him.¹² Man's structure remains Aristotelian, even from before Christ; of course, St. Thomas is obligated to return the agent intellect to the person in order to have the immortality of the soul, but the rational, contemplative soul is not in immediate contact with the supersensible. Step by step, with the help of imagination, our intellectual soul can rise to the perception of non-separate essences, Thomism tells us. We will only be able to know them from a distance, in the being's analogical knowledge that maintains an asymptotical duality between knower and known.¹³ One more time, the intellectual structure of a human being has the function to maintain the structure of cosmic order; even if St. Thomas proves to have an un-

12 "The Dominican magister has the habit to explain the properties of a being through extrinsic relations; this state of spirit brought him already before searching the individual's reason in the relations form has with matter, and the result was the negation of the individual"—Landry [Duns Scot], Alcan, 1922, p. 272.

13 In order to overcome this stage and arrive at direct, co-natural knowledge of these essences, "wisdom" is needed, but the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, see Cayné, II, p. 611 and, Gardeil, *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*, Paris, 1927, II, p. IV, *La conn. myst.*

deniable “spirit of finesse” in his demonstrations, the architectonical spirit, the “geometrical spirit” is still predominant in his philosophy. The primary focus is not on man’s inner, profound universe, but on his role to maintain as a hierarchical step the stability of the grandiose exterior edifice.¹⁴

Thus, at a certain moment, man began to feel too strongly the weight of this exterior structure and to consider that the objective hierarchical order, St. Thomas’s “cosmos,” is foreign to his being. The reaction produced a true Copernican revolution (in fact, historically, coincided with it), in which the center of gravity moved from the realm of the object to the one of the subject, in the individual ego. Renaissance was produced in this way: the dawn of the modern world came at the same time with it.

The notions of “modern world” and “modern philosophy” are not created by a dispute. They describe a certain historical type of existence, dominated by three reforms from its origin: the humanist reform of Renais-

14 We should not consider Thomism as essential and plenary expression of Catholicism, and so the Catholic doctrine should not be completely assimilated to St. Thomas’s. If we did so, we would ignore that the Catholic universe also includes other philosophical views completely accepted, some of them even opposed to Thomism (as, for example, the philosophy of Duns Scot). In itself, Thomism is a philosophy, just as much as it is a theology (see Tonquédec, *ibidem*, p. 145). Even more, it is so significantly a philosophy that “you can be a Thomist philosopher and an atheist at the same time” (*ibidem*, p. 150). From this perspective, it could be said that the themes of Thomism are neutral from a Christian perspective. If, however, the doctrine of St. Thomas became the official doctrine of the Catholic Church, this is due, we think, to a function of opportunity. For the situation in which Catholicism is in the modern world, a rationalized, crystallized, and massive view was needed, so that it could oppose the philosophical chaos of the East: Thomism has successfully accomplished this service in part.

sance, the religious reform of Protestantism, and the philosophical reform of Cartesianism. A new image of man appears in the center of history, image in which the tendencies of these reforms melted. Philosophy will reflect, of course, the great image of being.

If the Middle Ages meant for the history of the spirit the impersonal Aristotelian realm, modern philosophy is born under the sign of personal conscience, which is the consequence of rediscovering a Platonism filtered by previous centuries. This is especially the consequence of Christian germination, hidden in the mystery of the medieval night. The soul of the new man feels constrained within the walls of the medieval universe, which became all of a sudden too tight for his aspirations. This is why the old world turns to shatters. The naturalist view of Scholasticism is abandoned. The Beautiful Thomistic and Dantesque cosmos disintegrates; the objective and stable hierarchy of existence crashes, and it is replaced by the powerful affirmation of the individual spirit that became the only center of reality.

First, the "humanist" character of this period needs to be emphasized. As we showed above, it is a humanism constituted around man's external aspects. The independence and eminence of human being are affirmed especially in connection with man's possibilities of psychological knowledge and material instrumentation. He is the absolute, even anarchic master, and he tends to become the undisputed despot of the entire nature. The rediscovery of Platonic spirituality will serve less man's pneumatic^x interiority, his ontological depths, but rather the justification for future audacities of certain psychological degradations of intelligence, of that "rationalized reason" that serves man as means of defense against the divine light and its too burning proximity.

Things become more complicated with the second tendency that was strongly accused by the spirit of the time: the tendency to secularize all spiritual values. The modern ages are inaugurated with a militant laicism. We

must see its origin in the Protestant Reformation. “*Homo hominans*” replaces “*Deus creans*”; the autonomous individualism and even anarchy replace the integration in a transcendent order; the sacred religious realities are profaned and considered a “product” of the many specifically human functions and necessities (psychological, social, etc.). What results from this is a complex and protean mode of behavior that the spirit exhibits when faced with reality; it is a vain attitude (and after all non-human) of man toward life: this is what can be comprised under the generic (and thus needing an analysis) term of idealism.

The moments of Renaissance and of contemporaneity are solidary; one is the logic continuation of the other. The same theoretical anthropological vision dominates (often times in an occult fashion) the practical anthropological effort to build a new image for man: it is the idealist vision.

Descartes formulates the first clear and systematic expression of the new view. Breaking frameworks was certainly a revolutionary moment, even an emancipation. As we said, Renaissance largely expressed the Christian victory manifested in discovering the layers of a person. Unfortunately, though, foreign tendencies but characteristic to the age interfered in the Christian moment and overlapped it until it disfigured it. The result was an odd and corrupted image of man.

The Cartesian man reactualizes the original division of the “*homo platonicus*”; even worse, it complicates it with all the scientific and philosophical data accumulated during the ages between them. For Descartes, a human being is split into two substances, each of them complete and sufficient to itself: the pure spirit and the geometrical extension, *cogitatio et extensio*. “An angel driving a car”: this is the *homo Cartesii*. Cartesian anthropology is very significant for man’s situation today: it is the first angelist^{xi} testament given to future generations. By virtue of this, man denies his authentic condition, refuses his real being as it was given to him, and takes refuge in spirit, in the pure

and cold zones of existence. Once installed there, he begins to manifest the ambitions of a demiurge. More modest at the beginning, Descartes was content to deduce and found existence on knowledge ("*cogito ego sum*"); his followers, especially the German idealists of the 19th century, theomorphize the human spirit unscrupulously, postulate with Fichte that "to think about the world means to create the world," and decree with Hegel that if reality does not submit to reason, "so much the worse for it." It seems that the prophecy of the serpent was fulfilled under the idealist image of man: he became like God, knowing good and evil.

In reality, this idealist illusion is the last and the most dangerous among man's illusions. It could be described as "the systematic ignoring of the other because he is another."¹⁵ The Platonic ancestry of this position is easily recognizable. Indeed, the Platonic man exhibited the definite dualism of the body and the spirit, having as consequence the solitude of the spirit returned toward itself; gnoseologically, "*homo platonicus*" realized the parallel dualism between the sensible and the intelligible, having as consequence the absolute objectivity of the knowable: the idea is not only a substitute for the objects, but the very object itself, "*ens realissimum*," member of a world of transmaterial existences, of an identical structure with the one of the spirit. In order to know, the human intellect does not need to come out of itself: the philosophic idealism will essentially consist (especially with Hegel) in not recognizing the finite as really existing. "The absolute idea alone is being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is all

15 Maritain: *Reflexiuni asupra inteligenței (Reflections on Intelligence)*. 1929, p. 24.

truth.”¹⁶ For Hegel, logic becomes ontology. This is possible only because reason had previously become divine: there was nothing else above it. Everything that exists and can exist, God, nature, man, are only the successive moments of reason’s dialectical development. The secularizing tendency of the Renaissance man reached its peak in the complete secularization of the spirit, realized in idealism.

But what is, after all, the place of a human being according to the idealist view? It seems that no other philosophical system exalted man’s dignity as much as idealism did. Hegel, for example, considers man not more nor less than the source of knowledge that God has of himself.¹⁷ However, in reality, man’s situation was never more tragic and his real being never more endangered than within the idealist universe. Any idealist philosophy (and we will soon see that the most foolish philosophies are the idealist ones) represents the place of a systematic and subversive action of depersonalizing man. Idealism does not even ask the real problem of man: for it, a human being is sacrificed to the absolute, impersonal spirit that devours his personality. The idealist philosophy begins with proclaiming the autonomy of human reason and its hypostasis in the supreme, divine reality; at the end, it ends with denying the human person in the name of the same reason, transforming it into some object, as all of the other values that it glorified at the beginning: Spirit, history, and dialectic are all objectified, and man also ends up being objectified in his own eyes. Idealism is punished where it sinned.

16 Hegel. *Logik*, part II, section. 3, ch. 3. (See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 735—translator’s note).

17 Berdiaeff. *Essai de métaphysique eschatologique*, translated from Russian by M. Hermna, Aubier, Paris, 1946, p. 157.

However, there is another perhaps graver danger (because more latent) that menaces man as instituted according to the canons of idealism. Following the trajectory of an internal necessity, the spirit, no longer receiving anything from the outside, becomes obligated to start to produce in series. Thus, various respective products appear: clear and distinct ideas, sentences and norms of action etc. Refusing to acknowledge an ontological consistence to matter, monopolizing for itself any reality due to a supreme spasm of absorption of the spirit, idealism gives birth to materialism as one of his dialectical moments. (Actually, historically speaking, philosophical materialism appeared as a branch of the Hegelian left.) The monism of collective life must correspond to the monism realized at the level of reason. The products of human spirit are projected toward outside in order to serve the uniform planning of existence. If it does not obey, than "all the worse for it." Human science is transposed in the conditions of an absolutely creative science: for idealism, it becomes a demiurgic instrument that stirs and transforms the universe. Of course, one may believe that the statement that materialism is only the occult reverse of idealism is at least an exaggeration; however, it is true. The concrete man, destitute of his ontological nature, is indifferent to absolute idealization or absolute materialization. In both cases, he is viewed as an exterior object only and is never considered in the uniqueness of his value and existence, a uniqueness that is interior, pneumatic. Thus, idealism is wrecked in an equivocal nature: a human being is abandoned to uncertainty and left to drift under any dominant influence from the outside. The historical moment that we go through abounds in such attempts of seizing man for the purpose of the most varied philosophical visions. This is possible only because his profound nature continues to be despised, and so anthropology, even if coextensive to any philosophical effort, continues to be ignored by philosophers in its essential implications.

Not even the last vigorous philosophical conception, existentialism, could constitute an anthropology with authentic meanings and solutions. Without a doubt, its faithfulness to man remains the undisputed value of this current: the continual interest with increasing our sensibility for the ultimate problems of existence. However, for understanding man, for discovering his inner essence, we must recognize that existentialism does not propose a view regarding man's ontological depths, but rather a phenomenological material. Anxiety, fear, and death are used for constructing a metaphysics of the temporal, of the daily being, subservient to an impersonal, objective destiny (*das Man*); in this way, we are offered a descriptive anthropology at the most, and not a genuinely ontological one, from which we could discover man. In fact, despite its sincere effort to understand being, existentialism succumbs to the limitations of immanence: it sees man as a torn, double being, "abandoned to the world, irremediably destined to death" (Heidegger), bearing nothingness within his heart, and this breaks him in two. Existentialist anthropology is dualist anthropology. This is not an error in itself. However, existentialism theorizes this stage (this is its deficiency) because of the impossibility to go beyond it in full unity with the real, accessible transcendent. It results once again that a purely philosophical effort cannot comprise and resolve man's enigma, even if it outlines it strongly, as existentialism does.

In any case, the anthropocentrism around which any philosophical approach is structured remains relevant for the attitude of philosophy toward the problem of man. Directly or indirectly, of knowledge or of ignorance, voluntary or involuntary, philosophy is anthropological or philosophy does not exist. This can be understood in an existentialist, limited sense (any philosophy is the affirmation of a human creative subject), but also in a larger, metaphysical sense. In this latter case, philosophy is anthropological because all of its fundamental themes (knowledge, existence etc.) converge toward man and re-

solve the terms of human category. The error of philosophy (better said, the temptation to which it succumbs) was to ignore a capital truth: if a philosopher must be anthropocentric, man must be theocentric. The vital problem of philosophical thought had to be raising anthropology to the qualitative level that would allow it to see in man the Supreme Image included in his being. If man is the measure of all things, he also is measured according to divine dimensions. A human being is anchored in the heart of existence and is interior to reality only because of this profound communication between man and God. Man does not exclusively belong to the external, objective world; he also inhabits an extra-worldly world. For man, the complex of his relationships with the outside world is not primordial; instead, the "total man," the metaphysical man, who has his own destiny, incommensurable to outer nature, is primordial. Considered under this essential aspect, a human being leads necessarily to a transcendent world, to a divine-human world: any consistent anthropology encounters theology at a given moment of its unfolding. In fact, the problem of man as center of existence is a Christian problem *par excellence*; any anthropological philosophy is integrated with a certain title in the universe of a Christian worldview, even in the case when it claims to be an atheist philosophy or directly anti-Christian. After the naturalist anthropology of Renaissance and of the philosophies that were born from it, which considered man a part of the outer nature (this was called the "release" of man), the cadences of history rehabilitate a human being not in its quality of eminent fragment of objective nature, but as autonomous and at the same time essentially theonomous existence, as a complete universe, spread from nothingness to God, which it interiorly incorporates. Only a Christian view allows the return of the anthropology of the integral and unitary being. Natural thinking is tempted to slip either to only one aspect of the human being (the material or the spiritual), establishing thus a monist conception, or to mention both while keeping between

them the separation characteristic to dualism. With all of the reciprocal differences and even beyond these differences, there remains between monism and dualism a profound similarity, as between two extremities that touch each other. Both monism and dualism resolve the complexity and the rhythms of being unilaterally, suppressing the authentic unity of reality. It is a paradoxical unity in its essence, based precisely on the congruence of contraries. In the specific case of man, who is a double being but also rigorously one at the same time, to proceed in a monistic or dualist fashion means to tear his existence and to crucify him on the cross of his existence, material and spiritual. This cross was offered as a tool for his resurrection and for his life, and not for torture and death. Idealism and its necessary complement, materialism, are monist philosophies; Thomism remains dualist, even if it intentionally is the most Christian of philosophies¹⁸ (leaving aside Kantianism, the monument of philosophical thought). This dehiscence and this incompleteness that the image of man presents in all philosophical ideas are due to a Christian deficiency of philosophy, especially of contemporary philosophy. If you try to grasp the deeper sense of the development of philosophical effort, you realize in amazement that the real rapport between philosophy and Christianity functions reversely than how it is usually believed: it is not Christianity that borrows something from the presupposed autonomous values of philosophy, but philosophy, in its anthropological implications, is contained as a chapter of Christology. The problem of man as it has been formulated by philosophy over time represents a presentment, a partial glimpse of the real problem of man. The latter found its plenary expression in Christianity and its complete resolution in Jesus Christ.

18 See A. Forest. "Thomisme et idealism." *Revue Néoscholastique de philosophie*, Nov. 1934, pp. 317-336.

The categories of human thought—and the categories of human existence in general—have their depth in a Christological sense. *All* the problems of human nature and human thought were asked in connection with the person of the Savior. This will perhaps allow us to apply the Christological categories to the anthropological order and to say that, from this point of view, the philosophical anthropologies are either monophysite or Nestorian.^{xiii} Idealism, for example, is a development of the heresy of monophysitism. It proclaims only one nature and one principle, and the absorption of human person in a universal and impersonal Ego. Kantianism and even Thomism—philosophically speaking, the latter is not fully Christianized—are closer to the Nestorian view, with two distinct and separated natures, united only ethically or objectively (so exteriorly), and not in virtue of an inner communication.

Thus, even from this perspective, one can affirm that only an “Orthodox” climate, so an authentic and profoundly Christian view, can guarantee the formation of a complete anthropology, subsuming all of the dimensions of being. The transition into another world that can capitalize and signify our world can be realized only through man. But as long as this transition has not been realized, as long as the human person has not discovered itself in God, man and world are condemned to an insipid and miserable existence, and the anthropologies of any philosophy will reflect and theorize this state. Anthropology must necessarily meet theology on the itinerary of its unfolding, as man must meet God or succumb into nothingness.

Of course, this lucid philosophical conception must recognize a “dual” structure of reality. The secret is to not go from duality to dualism. Following Aristotelian thought, Thomism affirms clearly the unity of the human composite but introduces a certain anthropological dualism when it discusses the profound, spiritual structure of being. Constitutively, man does not have the possibility to

access God directly by an inner deepening. Thus, Thomism will also exhibit a gnoseological dualism: a human being cannot realize an intellectual contemplation independent from exterior faculties (which is characteristic only to the angels and to man, being offered as a supernatural gift). Thus, his knowledge will always be dominated by the distance subject-object, through which dualism is established. St. Thomas thought that the intellect and the faculties are forces superimposed to an inert substance; for him, the faculties were like “the arms of substance” (see. Landry, *Duns Scot*, 1922, p. 189): through this aspect of the Thomist view, dualism is introduced in the concept of the Common Doctor.

3. Theology and Anthropology

Anthropology receives a new plenitude the moment when it is lighted by the profound truths of revelation. The problem of man is placed into a new light by his ontological relationship with God: shadows and darkness are melted, the separations within being disappear, and everything converges toward a resolution with an amplitude and authenticity that the poor and sterile trials that pursued profane “deification” cannot even imagine. The most powerful expression of Christian anthropology is found in the patristic writings; they constitute the main document for the complete understanding of man, even if, at times, the truths found there need to be developed, since they are given only in germ. The Christian view concerning man gives back to him his autonomy and his own ontological greatness, but also his dignity within the cosmos. The preeminence of a human being is discovered in truth only after it is discovered in God.

Man is a true created god, a god by grace. This is the true and fundamental definition of man. Thus, transposed all of a sudden, a human being is in the supreme existential position: he is articulated grace to the gift of divine love in the mystery of Deification. He thus has maximum value but also maximum meekness precisely because he is

profoundly aware of the cause of his value. Man is a *microthéos*, the most authoritative representative of Divinity in the world. Then, he is also a “resumed” cosmos, but this in an absolutely unique fashion, which makes him not a microcosmos—the classical saying of philosophy—but a macrocosmos, “a great world placed in the small world.”¹⁹ The true cosmic sense of man is expressed only in these terms. On the one hand, from an external perspective, he is tied to the entire universe and integrated in the cosmos; on the other hand, though, man, who is the last one created within creation, is the first and the highest of its members. He is the ontological center of creation who binds all things together, combines them, and contains them within him. The world has its plenitude and highest point in man. Thus, there is nothing in the world that man cannot touch with his understanding, his consciousness, or his will. From the beginning, man was destined to “subdue the world” and to “have dominion over every living thing” (*Genesis* 1:28). The cosmos is created for man, so that it constitutes for him a body potentially and peripherally. In this sense, it can be said that the six days of creation represent the stages of man’s creation and thus the Cosmos is an anthropo-cosmos.²⁰ The cognitive relation with the world transforms man in a subject of “theoretical,” contemplative knowledge. Knowledge of the world is *human* knowledge: knowledge of being becomes possible only in man and through man. The entire existence—qualitatively, not quantitatively—obtains conscience through man. Man obtains his true self-conscience in God. If it can be said that a human being is an intermediary between the world and God, this must be understood differ-

19 Nic. Aghioritul. *Paza minții* (*Guarding the Mind* or *The Watchful Mind*), 14.

20 See Bulgakov: “Die christliche Anthropologie,” in *Kirche, Staat und Mensch*. Genf, 1937.

ently than in the naturalist view of Thomism, that places man on a certain step of an objectively hierarchical path. Man is an *ontological* intermediary between God and the world because he combines in his being these two realities in a miraculous natural unity. This is why the mystery of being is revealed in man and this is why knowledge of being and of God is possible through him. This potentiality needs to find its fulfillment in a “recapitulation” of the entire creation in man so that he, being then united to God, could thus offer through him the stage of deification for the entire created universe.²¹

Although schematized to the extreme, the above presentation allows foreseeing the unique amplitude that the theological view confers to anthropology, even regarding the significance of man’s position in cosmos. The vocation of the world, which was created for participating in the plenitude of divine life, ultimately depends on the agreement of man’s free will with God’s will. The understanding of the absolute relationship in which man enters with the Absolute leads to the final mystery of being, to its supra-categorical depths, where the human abyss meets the divine abyss. Even here, only a profound theological perspective allows for the understanding of these limit zones that are essential for the structure of a human being, which is constantly not permitted to any other anthropological conception.

The tension given in the direction toward the Absolute is constitutive for man. This is why the problem of man is at the same time a divine-human problem, a theandric problem. Philosophy has not managed to formulate a largely comprehensive anthropological view because this is the concern of theology, or at least of an essentially religious philosophy. In order to have a Christian understanding of man, it is fundamental to affirm a certain co-

21 Lossky, pp. 104–5.

ordination, a primordial agreement between human being and Divine Being: the revealed and traditional expression of this agreement is the notion of, "in the image and likeness of God," conferred to man at the moment of his creation. The Image of God fixates the Absolute within a human being and gives it an absolutely unique ontological structure within creation. The fundamental anthropological axiom of the divine similitude of our being shows that man was constituted from the beginning as a deiform being, with a nature capable to receive God (he is "*pati Deum*"). The problem of man can be formulated in its plenitude only in the light of a theandric idea, of category of the divine-human, and it is only in the light of this reality that it can find its solution. Even within a Christian framework, a theandric idea does not always have the deserved understanding. Even if the capitalization of this idea is the normal consequence of the very notion of image of God—a cardinal notion for the comprehension of man's essence and without which man cannot be conceived—Christian anthropologies were often formulated on different bases.

In the West, an anthropology that is centered on the significance of God's image in man was very little realized. The anthropology of St. Augustine, the Western anthropologist by excellence, which influenced equally the Catholic and the Protestant views, was rather an anthropology of the original sin and of the saving grace, and not a doctrine of man considered in his autonomy and in his specifically ontological value. Augustinian anthropology is characterized by a certain tendency to minimize "*imago Dei*" in man, emphasizing the original deficiency of the creature "super-elevated by special decree." St. Thomas Aquinas, "who did so much to correct St. Augustine but followed him nevertheless," will also affirm that man could have been created in his present state, without needing anything else. Thomistic anthropology with its own authority was established, at least in general lines, in the entire Catholic Church. The word of order remains the

same: nature as such is independent of gifts. The far away origins of modern naturalism can be seen in this attitude toward a human being. Naturalism will get attached to man's "pure nature" only, ignoring any transcendental given and especially the supernatural that is coextensive to the natural.

In any case, the West never understood the clear conclusions that stemmed from the doctrine of God's image in man. It is true that there were attempts to discover the elements of this divine image of man, and it was believed that one can discover it in reason (bringing thus an element from Greek philosophy), in freedom (emphasizing in this way a message of a Christian spirit), or more generally in man's spirituality. The paths of Western anthropology were clarified and were divided after the spiritual catastrophe of the Reform during Renaissance. The essential duality which is characteristic to Catholic anthropology²² (pure nature + supernatural grace) was brought to the limit and was exasperated by Protestantism. In the case of Barthianism,^{xiii} it even got to the point of a true metaphysical chasm between man and God. Practically speaking, in Barthianism we have a negation of theology and, of course, anthropology since man is deprived of his

22 Of course, between the Orthodox and the Catholic doctrines subsist important differences. Many emphasized them, on both sides, at times with too much and too doubtful zeal. In fact, a distinction is in reality neutral, and everything depends on the attitude you have toward it. We too often forget that differences can also unite, not only separate. Perhaps they were left in God's economy precisely with this purpose, so that our love abounds over [indecipherable word] to do. To transform the differences in a reason to produce systematic division means to give proof of superficiality in understanding Christian values and, in any case, of an unfortunate deficiency in spiritual love—sins that are foreign by definition to the Orthodox spirit. The one who commits them is placed *ipso facto* outside of the authentic Orthodox attitude.

ontological nucleus, the image of God, which is considered lost for good because of sin. Man is abandoned to his tragic solitude, in a world where the inflexible decrees of Providence are heavy and where even prayers of hearts in tribulation no longer reach It.

In fact, such a conception was produced only because initially (in Augustinian anthropology and the ones that follow it) the deiform, Theandric sense of being was diluted and the profound vision of the divine image in man was attenuated. Slowly, the human sphere was relativized, pushed exclusively in the psychological zones. Man's consciousness and his spiritual life were considered psychological values, while the transcendent reality became more and more foreign to being. It was thus almost natural (unfortunately) that the immanent and the transcendent became separate catastrophically, as in man's situation prior to Christ.

On the contrary, the anthropological perspective of Eastern Patristic is inherently theocentric and always aware that the connection with the Absolute is essential for man. According to Revelation, it takes into account especially the profound and mysterious kinship between man and God (which is at the basis of the fundamental Christological concept of filiation: "you are all sons of the Most High"²³), as an ontological reality eternally inscribed in man's structure, making him, at least virtually, any time "*capax Dei*." The gravitational center of being is placed in its depths: it is precisely "*imago Dei*," the substantial and ontological essence of man. Only being established on this profound area can anthropology respond validly to the question, "what is man," and why the structure of being is discovered only in his existence and destiny. At this level, the monist and dualist perspectives are exceeded in an ontological mode—a "pneumatic" mode of being—

23 See *Ps.* 81:6, *Lk.* 6:35 (note of the Romanian editor).

through which the unity of the integer state is realized, in a centripetal movement of all faculties and dispositions of nature, converging in the ineffable center of the profound man, where God rests mysteriously.

There are two men that are discovered in the same human being: "one who appears in sight, and the other who is hidden by the first—the invisible man, the inner man, the true and real man. We have then a man inside of us; and it is very true to say that we exist in our depths: I am the inner man."²⁴ If it is true that the main significance of our historical stage is precisely to highlight the failure of the outer man, of the "phenomenal" (apparent) man, of the man of immanence with all his elaborations that pretend to be Absolute, then what begins to reappear in the light of the day is the profound being of man, occultly articulated with God, the "noumenal" man through whom the ontological destinies of the world are resolved. At this moment, when history reached a rhythm that goes much beyond our outer being's possibilities of resistance, the problem of the spiritual stage of man became an issue of life and death. The inner depths of our being are more and more clearly perceived as the only metaphysical and meta-historical place of stability and authenticity. From this point of view, it could be said that the present history has a true "apocalyptic" function: to reveal hidden data; for the moment, it would cover only the personal universe of man.

In this temporal and spiritual circumstance, the message of Orthodoxy is particularly significant. Preserving and continuing creatively the Patristic tradition, Orthodoxy always had at heart the treasure of the hidden man. With maximum poignancy and eternal metaphysical tremor, orthodox spirituality has continuously experi-

24 St. Basil the Great. *Homily*, in *Hexaameron*, Paris, 1788, translation by Abbot Auger.

enced the mystery of our pneumatic interiority, the luminous mystery of the "hidden man of the heart." It expressed this effort over centuries of a silent (because ineffable) mystical experience, following lucidly the ontological restoration of man, starting from his profound nucleus so that his inner brightness overflows on his outer nature, illuminated Edenically one more time.

Never entering into an alliance with philosophy, in an attempt of theological-philosophical synthesis, the doctrinaire vision of Orthodoxy was constituted on the essentially new line of Christianity, understood as a second creation of creature, as conferring unique spiritual possibilities to man, gifted by grace with "the mind of Christ." This is why Orthodoxy moved always and exclusively within the order of Christian essentialities, realizing the understanding of the Christian spirit in an unsuspected measure or, in any case, in a way that was difficult to observe during the periods obsessed with the performances of the outer man. Today, when history revalues our profound being, the situation of Orthodoxy obtains an exceptional meaning: it seems to be preserved specifically for this day and this hour, when the deep universe of man must be rediscovered and returned to man, when, in order to regain a spiritual equilibrium that was long lost, man must return to his mysterious center, his deepest place, in the heart.

The awoken interest in Orthodoxy in our contemporary world is directly connected, we believe, with its not fully uttered message that allowed a glimpse into a quite unique fact: the heart of this Orthodox spirit, accomplished and perfected at the same time, comes under the sign and with the support of correlative theology and anthropology, and goes beyond the reasoning reason.²⁵

25 See M. Lot-Borodine: "L'anthropologie théocentrique de l'Orient chrétien." *Irenikon*, vol. XVI, 1939.

In the light of a spiritual experience always guided by Revelation, we can see the truth that an authentic anthropology can be constituted only in intimate connection with the data of theology. Searching and discovering himself in God, a human being discovers his hidden and mysterious existence at the same time. Without it, a human would not be what he is. A consistent anthropology, unfolded within the theological truths, finally leads with necessity to the mystery without which everything would be incomprehensible, to apophatic anthropology, to the hidden man who stands before the hidden God.

II. THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL APOPHATICISM

Abbyssus abyssum invocat

Ps., XLI, 7

1. The Significance of Apophatic Theology

The crucial moment of a being's existence is when it enters into a concrete, living, and conscious relationship with God. It is a final moment for some searches and also the moment of authentic resolution of some problems. At the same time, it also is a moment when *all* problems of man are asked—it is true, in a different fashion but that much more powerfully. Essentially and without simplifying things too much, one could say that the central problem of the relationships between man and God is the contingent creature's problem of knowing, grasping, and possessing the Supreme Being. This matter arises with great acuity especially in Christian thinking. The absolute transcendence of the First Principle constitutes a fundamental dogma of the faith's entire edifice. At the same time, the reality of God's communication to his creatures is the evidence that maintains the life and spiritual action of creatures, on their humblest levels, but also on the peaks of the deification according to grace of those who are chosen. The natural attitude of a human spirit in the process of common knowledge presupposes that, at the end of his ascension, understanding is identified with that which can be understood (in Platonic terms, "*nous*" is identified with "*noetón*").^{xiv} This is why the first approach of human intelligence in theological knowledge is the positive or cataphatic one, proceeding through affirmations. Of course, a Christian vision will not admit any moment of fusion when a created mind would immerse in the abyss of One (as in the Plotinian ecstasy); the dogma of the heterogeneity of essence opposes this categorically. There is always a solution of continuity between Creator and creature: this imposes a certain mode of attributing to God the limited

characteristics of being. The cataphatic theology will apply then to the Uncreated Being the perfections that it finds in the created world "*modo sublimiori*"; thus, it enlarges all human concepts to the infinite, affirming them in relation to God: he is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent.

Even with this corrective, the cataphatic knowledge does not express a real apprehension of divine being, but rather an incomplete knowledge of it, based on its manifestation within the created order. After all, positive theology remains an imperfect path of knowing God, and thus it is less indicated as it cannot pretend a complete sufficiency for itself. Following the explicit data of Revelation, human intelligence necessarily acknowledges that Divinity is so absolutely other than what we can think of it that no notion or value from the created world, regardless of how sublime they are, can be attributed to it properly. Divinity can come close to our understanding if we rather refuse any predication that would be juxtaposed to it precisely for emphasizing as strongly as possible that "God is none of the things that are"; even negations cannot be sustained all the way through because God is "*toto coelo*" even beyond them. This is the path of negations—negative or apophatic theology—a more adequate attitude for understanding divine Being, infinitely different from us.

Since all human concepts become after all predicates of knowledge when we integrate them in a logical expression, apophatic theology mainly emphasizes the inherent incognoscibility of God, which means the impossibility of transforming the First Principle into the subject (or the object) of a cognitive act that would include finite notions next to it.

Apophaticism is not a simple theoretical attitude when faced with divine mystery, even if it includes such a moment; in reality, its position is much vaster and more comprehensive, implying an internal structure with steps and nuances that we would call "apophatic modes." In this way, apophaticism illustrates very different levels of spiritual experience, beginning with the intellectual effort of

transcending conceptually the expressions concerning knowledge of God and ending with the antinomical expression of the deifying union between man and God.

The first apophatic attitude is represented by what is called “negative theology.” Its proponent is Dionysius the Areopagite, the alleged enigmatic disciple of St. Paul. The Areopagitic corpus is partly in the Greek-Oriental tradition of genuinely intuiting the abyssal mystery in which Divinity reposes. Dionysius does not accept a definition (after all, it is impossible) of “*ágnostos Théos*” that goes beyond being. He describes the mystical ascension, the “*itinerarium mens in Deum*,” as a succession of negations by which the mind removes one by one everything that is between it and God, so everything that can be known, in order to reach the Unknown, who is beyond any sensible or intelligible touch, surrounded by inscrutable darkness. This is the sacred darkness that is God’s very incognoscibility, an obscure center, an incommunicable essence, or the hidden Face of the One who cannot be seen by anyone without dying. On the gnoseological level, apprehending Divinity as living in darkness is ignorance: according to Dionysius, the true knowledge of God is realized by “agnosis”—ignorance.²⁶ The Supreme Being is beyond even ignorance, in the “supra-luminous darkness,” in the “supra-essence” of his existence. As it is presented, the Areopagitic view offers us the grandiose perspective of the absolute transcendence of Divinity, indicating also the trajectory that must be followed in order to accomplish a maximum closeness to it. However, the itinerary of negative theology remains structurally a discursive method. Of course, even with this title, the ascension “*per via negationis*” implies a purification, an ascesis of the spirit, but this is operated at the level of concepts. The mechanism of

26 See *Teologia Mistică (Mystical Theology)*, ch. I, translation by Dulac, 1865, p. 305.

negative progression indicates it with clarity: in opposition with the cataphatic method that utilizes positively symbols borrowed from the created order, the apophatic way climbs on the ascendant path of transcendence insisting on the dissimilitude of any symbol in relation to God's nature. In this way, negative theology essentially employs a dialectical method of comparing and appreciating the expressive value of every term when it is attributed to God. And, since there is no notion that can resist this analysis, the concepts are denied one after the other. Symbolized by the obscurity of darkness, God's incognoscibility corresponds, of course, to an essential quality of the Divine Being. However, within negative theology, it actually expresses the inadequacy that separates God and created being. The consequence of this inadequacy is that the One who is Light itself or, better said, is superior to both light and obscurity, appears to our knowledge (or to our ignorance) as darkness. At the same time, as we will see further, God can still be known genuinely and authentically; this is why the radical and exclusivist accents of the negative way in theology are mistaken at least by unilaterality.²⁷

Thus, we could say that negative theology has two major significances: a logical one, which is direct and explicit, and an ontological one, which is indirect and implicit. The ambivalent notion of "darkness" hides and expresses both of them: the logical expression corresponds to the attitude of a knowing subject faced with the hypernoetic mystery of divine majesty, and the ontological one to its inaccessible character, to the absolute transcendence

27 This is the case of V. Lossky; see *Th. mys.*, p. 21 sq. In his course of *Christian Ascesis and Mysticism*, Bucharest, 1947, Prof. Stăniloae makes a profound analysis of Lossky's position in regard to negative theology, p. II, 25. There is also a very clear and systematic exposition of the problem of apophaticism and negative theology, *op. cit.*, p. II, pp. 29–43.

of the Light which does not fade. Of course, one depends on the other; since God is incomprehensible, the mental operation of the knowing subject will be "ignorance," and the "object" of knowledge (the term is improper) will be described as "darkness." Logically speaking, negative theology is constituted as the place where the Being of Beings is noetically apprehended. In its cognitive attempts, the mind does not find any material quality, any intelligible nucleus that it can formally specify. Thus, it will try to suggest conceptually its position in this knowledge situated beyond the opposition between subject and object, but it remains determined by a relation that will necessarily remain here as an inherent inadequacy. Arrived at the end of negation, "we know beyond intellect by actually not knowing."²⁸ In other words, "it is knowledge without veils, being hidden by everything that we know in creatures."²⁹ In *Divine Names*, Dionysius postulates that "God can be known by gnosis or 'agnosis.'"³⁰ In both cases, knowledge develops within and due to a discursive process. However, negative theology is not a simple commutative continuation of the positive one; it also has a special specific value. The path of the dialectic "*per via negationis*" is part of an effort to follow the line proper to philosophical intelligence but beyond philosophy itself. Negative theology tends to have a metaphysical experience, but conceivable and eidetic. This is the reason why St. Gregory Palamas says, "we also know that in negative theology the mind understands the things denied about God."³¹ In this negative intellectual experience, it is very important to provide a prefiguration, an "*análogon*" on the logical level, of what is effectively produced on the pneumatic level in the mo-

28 *Th. Myst.*, ibidem, p. 309.

29 *Ibidem*, p. 310.

30 VII, 3, p. 253.

31 *Trat. III*, apud. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

ment of “contemplating Divine light, by seeing without form, which can be experienced by the mind beyond mind in the Holy Spirit.”³² It is in this place that we find the categorical differentiation between Christian negative theology and the negative theologies of Ancient philosophy or Far-East metaphysics. For the latter, the many negative formulas cover in fact a long ascetic process developed in the order of immanence, pursuing emptying and denuding the intellect of any own representation and operation so that it is co-naturalized more and more to the peace and silence through which its profound being is expressed.

As it is presented in the Areopagitic Corpus and the entire Patristic tradition, the negative way of Christian theology moves on qualitatively different coordinates. The meaning and the role of “divine darkness” are dominated by a dogmatic, so revealed, fact: the transcendence of the Divine Being. The cloud and the mystical obscurity symbolize here the impossibility in which the ineffable union between Creator and creature finds itself, so the impossibility to exhaust an “object” inherently situated beyond any touch and which cannot be properly speaking perceived as an object. The Areopagitic ignorance is essentially on this structural heterogeneity between the knowing subject the One to be known, Who always goes further and further up, beyond our apprehension: “we see and we know the One Who is beyond seeing and knowing precisely in not seeing and not knowing.”^{33xv} What do we know after all? Precisely this, “that God is beyond any given sensible or intelligible, shouting as the prophet, ‘your knowledge raises wonderfully above me, it surpasses my

32 St. Gregory Palamas, *ibidem*, p. 34.

33 *Th. myst.*, II, p. 310.

powers.”³⁴ The ignorance of negative theology is not a mystical agnosticism, and even less an empty place. It ends in grasping an ontological reality, which is an intellectual experience *sui generis* of divine transcendence, *in finem nostrae cognitionis*. The entire dialectic of the negative way is developed at the very thin edge between the logical, discursive level and the intuitive, ontological one. Passing from the first to the second level undoubtedly goes beyond the possibilities of human reason, but here the spirit reaches its limits: the spirit grasps another reality beyond itself, inaccessible ontologically to its finite powers. Thus, in a supreme effort to extend its own limits, the spirit tries to contain this reality and communicate it in its own concepts. This is an infinite dialectical process, which gives the spirit a specific dynamism in the act of knowing God, for the Supreme Being will never be contained in the limits of a created *mens*, regardless of how extended they would be. In this sense, negative theology reveals its ontological significance that stays at its basis: it is the logical expression of the essential heterogeneity between man and God. On its turn, this heterogeneity finds its most powerful expression in the dogmatic notion of “creation.” Any consubstantiality between the producing cause and the produced thing is excluded in creation. The abyss of nothingness gets established between them, and only a free act of divine love can fill it. It is true that natural intelligence, non-illuminated by the data of revelations, tries to suppress the ontological distance between Creator and creature, proposing first the correlation between cause and effect, both of them being on the same existential level. (The identity

34 *Ep. V., op. cit.*, p. 504. St. Gregory of Nyssa says, “The true knowledge of the One who is searched and genuinely seeing Him consist in understanding that He transcends any knowledge, being separated from anything by his incomprehensibility, as if darkness” (377A, p. 111).

between cause and effect is strongly affirmed in Hindu metaphysics and in Plotinus emanationism.) In reality, this is a pseudo-solution: absolute heterogeneity is not surpassed, but only retracted logically and grammatically by enouncing the causal relation. Christian negative theology is structured around this inherent non-equivalence between supreme Cause and the contingent caused thing. As Dionysius says, “there is no exact comparison between caused and cause: truly, the caused exhibits traits similar to the cause up to a point, but the cause subsists outside and above anything precisely because it is the principle of any existence.”³⁵ Thus, the ascension “*per via negativa*” of this first apophatic stage, negative theology, will essentially consist in enunciating the ontological separation between God and any finite reality, separation mentioned in all moments of the dialectic development. Negative theology does not attempt to establish “who God is,” but, being aware of the caducity of such an enterprise, it shows “how God is none of the things that are,” and this as eminence and not because of any deprivation of existence. Thus, in the Areopagitic writings there is an abundance of terms composed with *hyper* expressing the transcendence of the Divine Being as well as Its inadequacy to any finite value, which is consequent to this transcendence (*hyperousiotes*, *hyperagothotes*, *hypersophos*, *hyperteles* etc.).³⁶

35 *Op. cit.*, *Divine Names*, cap, IX, f 6–7 *passim*, pp. 278–9.

36 The Areopagitic terms correspond to real negations, the negation of essence, of the good, of wisdom, etc., as we conceive them. It is interesting to mention that this “suppressions” are realized by a “supreme” exaltation of values, which suggests a formal similitude (exclusively external, of course) with the central Hegelian concept of “*Aufhebung*”—which also resolves (“suppresses”—*aufheben*) the contradictions, lifting them to “supreme” levels. The method emphasizes the formal dialectical character of negative theology.

The ontological implications of negative theology explain also the necessity of a framework of Christian spirituality in order to ensure its correct development. Deprived of the dogmatic and metaphysical foundations that establish the non-consubstantiality between Divinity and created being, negative theology becomes a simple intellectual dialectic with a subordinated significance, that of an auxiliary of an operation of noetic simplification. It does not reach an essentially unknowable Transcendent, but rather something structured identically to our spirit, in which our spirit is reabsorbed (as in Plotinian metaphysics). Negative theology is solidary with an entire theological vision: as Lossky subtly remarked, a God that is not the "*Deus Absconditus*" of Scriptures is not suitable for the truths of Revelation. Origen, for example, being insensible to "*ex nihilo*" creation, was also refractory to divine inco-gnoscibility and ready to consider a conceptual definition of God as perfectly possible.³⁷

Negative theology is then placed in the general order of apophaticism as its first stage, as a still external modality, accomplishing the function of preliminary methodology and, perhaps, of theoretical analysis of a concrete mystical itinerary.³⁸ However, if it stopped here, apophaticism would not be what it actually is, so the expression of vivid, meta-intellectual experiences that engage man's profound

37 *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

38 In his "La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys et dans la tradition patristique" (*Etudes Carmélitaines*, vol. II, Oct, 1938, pp. 33–54), H.C Puech answers the delicate question of whether the Areopagitic doctrine has an experimental or theoretical character, whether it is the expression of a symbolic vision or a concrete mystical experience. His answer goes toward the second hypothesis, considering the Areopagitic symbolism a result of a dogmatic speculation, developed around traditional dogmatic and mystical data.

being. This is why negative theology is continued naturally (although not necessarily) by a second apophatic mode, a superior step in apophaticism, representing the stage of existential intuition of Divine transcendence. In the first moment, the discursive dialectic of negative theology gave supreme proofs of honesty and gnoseological potentiality precisely in acknowledging its inherent inability to intellectualize Divine Being. Thus, in this second apophatic moment, it will no longer pretend to claim the ascension of the discursive spirit in God—*ascensio mentis in Deum*. On the contrary, any mental operation will have to cease in this stage. The soul's unified powers must recover their transparency, lost in the amalgamation within the phenomenal multiplicity of the external world. They will have to get detached from any connection with the outside and return inside. Liberated from the deforming stamps of the ideas that darken it and shining with the clarity of its own "noumenal" structure, "*mens*" enters in the stage of contemplative prayer, opening itself toward the supreme perspective of a union in deification, which still does not reach even in this stage.³⁹ In contrast to negative theology, the apophatic stage now considered is presented as a role of an ampler effort that includes all the levels of being, not just the intellectual one, culminating in the inner work of the prayer "without form." If negative theology was accessible to any intellectual, honest, and consistent view that undertook to divine knowledge, the second apophatic stage necessarily includes a profound integration in the spiritual life, going even to the necessity of the technique of inner prayer. Structurally, this apophatic experience can be described as a "*via negationis*." It is not dialectical

39 See P. Stăniloae, *loc. cit.*, pp. 31–34 and pp. 43–48, who also considers this apophatic moment connected with "pure prayer" as intermediary between the moment of negative theology and that of divine light.

and conceptual, as in the first case, but existential, non-eidetic,⁴⁰ and trans-conceptual, leading not only to the intellectual conscience of the divine presence, but also to the lived apprehension of the ultimate mystery, perceived ineffably as “silence.”⁴¹ The negative element is here presented under the form of the ascetic process of excluding and abolishing any foreign presence from the spirit, presence that would perturb the ontological regime specific to our noetic being. Due to a clear operation of purification (let us say it again, engaging our entire being), the mind that has been emptied of shapes dwells in the presence of God, having prayer as the only activity.

Of course, in such a state, the notional and imaginative apparatus used by thinking in the usual processes no longer has a place—it is indeed contraindicated. This is because the essential plasticity of the mind would register impressions produced by thoughts or images, even if highly elevated, and it would be disturbed. “In prayer,” St. Gregory Palamas says, and his verdicts have an exceptional value for understanding these states, “the mind renounces step by step all its connections with the things that exist, first with those which tie it to opprobrious things, evil and corruptible things, then with those that are in the middle and change it in better or worse accord-

40 Without forming images or ideas.

41 See also André Scrima, “O expunere sintetică a isihasmului” (“A Systematic Description of Hesychasm”) in *Despre isihasm (On Hesychasm)*, volume edited by Anca Manolescu, Humanitas, 2003, pp. 133–134: “*Existential apophaticism*. Going beyond the *negative path* is not limited this time at the level of intellectual knowledge only. The inner life, in its coherent stability, is called to become of the same nature (to ‘co-naturalize’) with silence, to recognize, in other words, that no pulsing, no affect, no internal movement can contain God.” See also the chapter “Existential Apophaticism” in *Timpul Rugului Aprins (The Time of the Burning Bush)*, second edition, Humanitas, 2000, pp. 44–46 (note Andrei Găitanaru).

ing to the purpose of those that use them and with the habit and knowledge they have (this is why the Fathers advise to not receive the knowledge that the enemy makes appear during prayer, so that we are not robbed of the highest things). Thus, leaving all these ties step by step, as all things higher than these, the mind comes complete out of all real things during pure prayer. This emergence is much higher than the theology by negation because it is proper to those who reached lack of passions.”⁴²

The absence of a mental activity operating in concepts, on the one hand, and the description of the “inform gap” realized by the spirit at this stage, on the other hand, should not lead us to suspect an existential (“atonic”) void as a characteristic note of the state of the mind during contemplative prayer. Such thinking is committing an error of elementary logic, a “*contradictio in adjecto*,” because prayer cannot be in any way compatible with passivity and inner “quietism” understood exclusively.⁴³ It is true that accomplishing a state of profound prayer modifies essentially the ontological regime of our inner life, up to the point of transfiguration. However, none of the things that present a real and substantial value for spirit is dissolved with a refined technique of annihilation in order to make space to a contemplative prayer. Instead, prayer becomes an all-encompassing category of the inner universe to such an extent that any action, any operation, and any gesture of being is integrated with a certain title in the in-

42 St. Gregory Palamas. *Treatise on the Holy Light*, apud. P. Staniloae, p. 32.

43 However, this error appeared in some of the older Western studies on hesychast prayer. See especially the very precise account of Prof. G. Wunderle (“La technique psychologique de l’hésychasme byzantine”—*Etudes Carmélitaines*, vol. II, October 1938, pp. 61–67), which emphasizes the active and synergist asceticism of hesychast spirituality.

ternal tension and rhythm of prayer. More than any dialectic and more than any intellectual approach, prayer reveals the propulsive force of an experienced mystery in which we advance as we conquer our interiority. It becomes knowledge, it becomes action, it becomes life; in a word, it is incarnated in us until it reaches our mysterious essence. In this second apophatic stage, prayer accomplishes a homogenization and ontological reconstitution of the inner being, thus preparing it to enter even higher depths.

The Areopagitic works mention this other apophatic moment, which is consecutive and superior to negative theology. One could even say that the notion of apophaticism acquires a proper content corresponding to its logical significance only now, for it is at this level of profound experience that the ultimate reality is existentially intuited as "ineffable," pure "silence." The soul could not grasp it as such and could not reach it unless it had not previously been co-naturalized with the mystical "silence" in which Divinity is manifested at this stage. Thus, silence is the condition of access to Divinity, but, at the same time, God himself will be called "*sigé, hesichía, aphtenzía*,"⁴⁴ for He is its cause and appears in this way. ("God does not speak, nor does He allow it to be spoken," St. Maximus says, III, 108.) This transposition from the subjective to the objective level is often encountered in the Areopagitic writings. German medieval mysticism (especially the school of Master Eckhart) will emphasize preponderantly and at times in an exaggerate fashion the speculative outline presented here by Dionysius the Areopagite, affirming categorically that "*Wesen ist Schweigen*."^{xvi} This identification contains in germs the peril of a grave confusion, for the spirit is easily tempted to equate the silence it realizes in its own being

44 See *Divine Numbers*, ch. IV, p. 165 et passim.

with the silence that expresses the ineffable essence of the Supreme Being.

In the first stage of the discursive apophaticism of negative theology, negations were realized and were expressed by the prefix *hyper*. Now, in order to suggest the content of the experienced realized in this second moment, the construction with “*hyper*” is insufficient because it implies another inferior correlative fact that it transcends and in relation with which it defines its transcendence. There is need for a stronger negation than the Greek “*me*” (which is not in fact a negation, since “*meden*” has the meaning of “something” rather than of “nothing”), one that would surpass even “*ouk*” (which is also conditioned by a differentiated content as the object of negation and, in this sense, it is relative). Only the uncorrelated “*a*”—*alpha privativum*—can express this powerful negation, suggesting the superessential^{xvii} principle, the intangible nucleus symbolized by silence, its mystical expression. Divine being is “*alogía*,” “*anoesía*,” “*anonymía*”;⁴⁵ the soul feels divine presence intuitively, not only as an inherent transcendence for its abilities to comprehend intellectually, but as a living reality; not as an amorphous emptiness, but as the place of a personal and mystical union with Divinity that communicates to the soul at the level at which it is. Since the content of this moment is a *union*, since the soul’s faculties were silent and have ceased their inferior activity in order to open themselves to another one, superior and unuttered, God is understood as silence.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, being has not yet reached the supreme heights of union with God, and so the apophatic modality of this moment still expresses an intermediary study. From here on, however, the perspectives are open

45 IV, ch. I, paragraph 1, p. 127.

46 See Ilie Ecdicul, *Philocalia*, IV, pp. 315–412: “Only those who do not contemplate anything during prayer see God.”

directly toward the abyssal mystery in which a human being is called to participate by the deifying love of the Being of Beings—and whose apophatic expression is realized in unique forms, established on the concrete experience of the luminous mystery beyond being.

2. Superessential Apophaticism

Thus, the apophatic attitude is coextensive to theognosis: both negative theology and contemplative prayer establish the limits of knowledge of God, limits determined by the hypernoetic transcendence of Divine Being, in the first case, and the living intuition of the mystery of the unfathomable alterity of Divinity, in the second one. But the real problem of apophaticism appears only from now on, in a form that introduces us directly in the essence of the apophatic vision, where it is established on the ultimate mystery of Divine Being, as we find it revealed in the pneumatic tradition of the Church.

The moment when the problem of knowing God is asked completely beyond the strictly discursive stage, it is articulated with another ontologically prior problem, and they are offered together to us for solving them. On the one hand, one asks what can be known (or participated) in God. On the other hand, one asks the method in which the intelligible being arrives to truly have communion with God, to rejoice in the fruits of this "*enosis-théosis*," deifying union, supreme purpose of creation. These two questions are correlative and cannot be resolved separately. Further, knowledge of God is inherently determined by the measure of real participation in the Divine Being, participation that substantiates and conditions our entire life in God.

The answer to this double question is present in the entire Patristic age (even if it is only implicit at times), in the work of almost all the Fathers who dwelled on the problem of knowledge of God, as on Divine Being itself. The answer is also found in the Holy Scripture, as it would be expected and as the Fathers emphasized later.

The doctrinal writer of the apophatic theology par excellence, Dionysius the Areopagite shows in his work the solution of the essential problem of knowledge-participation into Supreme Being, solution that leads us to the last stage of apophaticism, where the abyssal mystery of Divinity encounters the deep mystery of man. Still, in order to ensure that a creature has real access to God, without thus infirming the absolute transcendence of Divinity, so powerfully emphasized before, Dionysius proposes his doctrine, expressing the unanimous consensus of the Patristic era regarding this problem. This is the doctrine of uncreated energies, which are different but also undivided from essence. Next to a predominantly gnoseological interest, which is an expression of the human effort to have a noetic apprehension of Divinity, the Areopagitic works contain another great topic, centered on the vision of the irradiant dynamism of creative divine Illumination that goes toward creation so as to communicate its deifying perfection in a first moment. Then, in a second moment, it engages creation into an infinite ascension toward the Supreme Spring of these irradiations. Even if impregnated to saturation with Areopagitism, Western Middle Ages neglected this aspect of Dionysian doctrine, focusing instead on the first one, which is at the basis of the German and Rhenish school of speculative mysticism. In opposition to this, Eastern-Greek spirituality, sensing the mysterious core of Christian teaching, raised it without ceasing over centuries of spiritual experiences until St. Gregory Palamas was called to distill the divine juice of this ripe fruit of orthodox gnosis in the Byzantine Middle Ages.

The Areopagitic doctrine exposes the luminous perspective of Virtues or Divine Numbers that proceed from the unknowable hyper-essence and then manifest it fully. Being both principles and purposes for created beings, these energies are communicated to us, because they can

participate in us. They penetrate us and raise us up by analogy to the Principle of Principles.⁴⁷ A true metaphysician of theophany, Dionysius shows how God is omnipresent through His revealed providences. They are in fact truly Himself pouring outside of Himself, God “*ad extra*”—*próodos Theós*. Beings participate in prescribed modes—which are modes of knowledge at the same time—to the underlying Divinity of these processions, Divinity that is in no way diminished by them.

Transposed in the precise categories of dogmatic expression, the Areopagitic vision of divine processions is enounced as the distinction between essence and uncreated energies. With an unavoidable inaccuracy due to our limited possibilities of communication, we distinguish in the Divine Being two mysterious modes of God's presence: first, the depths of divine presence, eternally inaccessible and ineffable, incommunicable and incomprehensible, which cannot be contemplated even by the spirits and are accessible only to God himself, as St. Basil says⁴⁸; second, that which relates to this essence, God's “*ad extra*”

47 The significance of the notion of *analogy*, central for Dionysius, is essentially different from its logical-philosophical significance from Thomist-Aristotelian thought. In the latter, the analogy indicates the means to apply the logic frames that contain the finite proportionally with the infinite in order to realize the passing from creature to Creator. For Dionysius, “*analogos*” means “according to the measures of everyone's forces or worthiness.” This conception expresses clearly the personal character of divine energies that are adapted to the vessel that receives them. This also suggests the necessity of *epektases* as moments of infinite growing, both of the receptacle and of the deifying energy received in it (See *La Hiérarchie Ecclésiastique*, ch. II, part III, § II, p. 411, ed. Dulac; *Hiérarchie Céleste*, ch. III, 3, *ibidem*, p. 334).

48 *Adversus Eunom*, apud. Florovsky: “L'Idée de la Création dans la Philosophie chrétienne,” in *Logos*, Ière année, 1928, no. 1, Bucharest, p. 21.

operations, His multiple and multiform energies which are communicable and comprehensible for a creature. Even if it is truly distinct from essence, divine energy is indivisible from it, being the expression of the common three-hypostatic nature. This is why those worthy of receiving the gift of deifying energies receive the inhabitation of the Holy Trinity at the same time, which is ineffably united with its natural energies, in which it is present in a different mode but still as real as in its nature.

Being a genuine mysterious heart of Christian spirituality, the doctrine of uncreated energies represents the depth of light in which the being of God's chosen ones have dived during centuries of hidden pneumatic experience in order to be reborn shining from participating into God's glory, thus anticipating the super-natural irradiation on Resurrection day. This vision presupposes the two previous stages of apophaticism which are to be subsequently exceeded.⁴⁹ Indeed, if the first apophatic form—negative theology—ended in the intellectual intuition of divine transcendence, perceived as obscurity, agnosis, and then the second apophatic moment, of contemplative prayer, realized the existential intuition of the Divine Abyss present as Silence, as an ineffable sanctificator still not communicated through its deifying energies, now, in this final stage of supreme relation of a creature with its

49 Describing the third Pauline sky in *Liber Ambiguum*, St. Maximus the Confessor first presents St. Paul's ascension as a progression composed by alternative negations and affirmations (what is negation for the inferior order is affirmation for the one superior to it), until the last negation is reached, beyond it being only God. Here, in the immediate proximity (*ámesos*) of Divinity and before the invisible Essence, the Apostle *receives the divine revelations* that the human tongue is not allowed to utter, thus maintaining the condition of silence (*sigé*) and "agnosis" even in this supreme overcoming (See P. Maréchal. *Psych. des mystiques*, vol. II, Paris-Bruxelles, 1937, p. 33 sq. note).

Creator, God, at the same time and as real as before, He is manifested and He is hidden, He remains absolutely transcendent and heterogeneous to creature, penetrating it inside in order to transform it by grace in that which He is by nature. Being an ultimate mystery of a being and also the beginning of the infinite ascension toward God, this essentially ineffable moment becomes also communicable. In its last stage, apophaticism reveals its real function and significance: not only that of hiding, but also of discovering; not only that of negating, but also of affirming.⁵⁰ The antinomic character of this apophatic moment stems from here. It truly unites heterogeneous terms in a *coincidentia oppositorum* that seems to be the law of interiority and of reciprocal dependence of the humane and the divine in us. As we will soon see, the antinomism realized at this spiritual level is in fact the expression of a new modality of a being's existence, which is transmuted ontologically in a deifying being, participating in the depths of pneumatic life in which the contrasts are reconciled and the antagonisms that last only as long as we keep them at the surface are melted.

Every apophatic stage is constituted depending on a certain relation of the intelligible being with the Supreme Being: apophaticism is the necessary, logical, and ontological reflex of the degree and mode experimenting the Divine Abyss. From this point of view, it is first of all determined by a creature's capacity (or incapacity) to grasp the Creator; concomitantly with negating any equivalence between God and the world, something is also affirmed, implicitly and indirectly, about Divine Being, and that is at least its transcendence. Both negative theology and especially the apophaticism of contemplative prayer also have a positive sense, being the most adequate expression of

50 See also André Scrima, "O expunere sintetică a isihasmului," in *Despre isihasm*, pp. 136–137 (n. A.G.).

the intuition of a real and authentic aspect of God, aspect that escapes cataphatic theology. Negative theology affirms the absolute transcendence of Divinity even in relation to our intellectual being, and the profound state of prayer intuitively the presence of Divine Abyss as ineffable reality and as supernatural silence. However, the last apophatic stage goes even further, and it could be said, in a certain sense, that it goes even beyond apophaticism. Now, God reveals the supreme mystery itself, the abyssal mystery of Divine Being, which is essence and energy at the same time and eternally. This mystery offers itself to being known by a creature, but it also remains eternally unknown. The third mode of apophaticism is the expression of this deep final act of revealed Divinity in its uncreated energies. This mode resolves the vital problem of the human being, whether it is possible to have positive affirmations about God (man has always asked sighing, "Tell me Your Name"⁵¹). Without the danger of anthropomorphism and so of "idolatry" (as St. Gregory of Nyssa defined any positive concept about Divinity), God can be known and knowledge of Him can be expressed because it is based on the luminous communication of divine energies that share concretely the Divinity of being.⁵² If both

51 *Gen.* 32:29 (*n. ed.*).

52 Such descriptions of the deifying participation to the uncreated energies abound in the writings of the pneumatophore Saints of the East, especially in the Byzantine Middle Ages. St. Symeon the New Theologian can be considered a great lyrical poet of the love of divine light, as St. Gregory Palamas is its great metaphysician. Here is a characteristic passage from St. Symeon the New Theologian: "What language will he say or what mind will utter, which word will pronounce, for truly dreadful it is, dreadful beyond any word; I see the light that the world does not have. In the middle of the cell, sitting on a bed, I see inside of me the Maker of this world and I speak, I love Him, I eat and I am well nourished with the sight of God only, and being together with him, the requests

negative theology and the experience of contemplative prayer could affirm of God only the obscurity, the agnosis, or the divine ineffability (which equates in fact to a negation), the last apophatic moment, which is established on the participation of uncreated energies, is paradoxically the moment of the strongest affirmations about Divine Being. However, these affirmations will necessarily be clothed with the antinomic form in order to emphasize that the entire apophatic problem was transposed in a zone of reality where affirmation, negation, and thus apophaticism itself are shown with different appearance and significance than those we usually attribute to them. The apophatic attitude stops being determined here by subjective elements (that belong to the knowing subject) in order to be revealed as an objective structure, independent from the contingent creature and its gnoseological aptitude or inaptitude.

St. Gregory Palamas, the last and the most profound representative of the tradition of the great pneumatic "Didascali," beginning with St. John the Theologian and St. Paul, emphasized with an undeniable force the unique character of this apophatic modality. On the one hand, he affirms that "there is no name for God, in this world or in the one that is to come, and there is no word born in the

surpass. And I know this well and truly. Where the body is then, I do not know.

And the Lord loves me and receives me into Him, and in His arms He covers me. The one who dwells in heaven is also in the heart. Here and there He shows Himself to me, and I immediately say toward the face of the Lord: 'Look, Master, you show me similar to the angels and better than them you made me. For unseen are you to those not in proximity in being and nature. But entirely seen you are for me, Master, and to your Nature my being is mixed.'" The entire problem of knowledge-apprehension of God is displayed and resolved in this passage, in the spirit of antinomic apophaticism.

soul or uttered in any language that could express Him; there cannot be any touch with Him, experienced or thought, and there is no image that could fit Him, regardless of the image.”⁵³ On the other hand, he affirms that “the divine substance is incommunicable and, nevertheless, it is in a sense communicated; we participate to divine essence and, however, at the same time, we do not participate fully to it.”⁵⁴ Also, “divine essence is communicable through its energies, although not in itself... maintaining in this way the incommunicability and the non-revealing of the non-exteriorized essence.”⁵⁵ St. Gregory Palamas willingly brings us before a theological antinomy which, taking into consideration the entire tendency of the Patristic doctrine before him, must be considered having an ontological character (or, more exactly, “supra-ontological,” God being beyond the limits of everything that is and even beyond the limits of existence), and not being something that exists only in our idea of God—a logical antinomy resulting from the organic incapacity of the mind to conceive Divine Nature fully. The realities lived concretely in this stage reveal an apophatic superessential dimension, the only one that allows and ensures our existence, movement, and life in the hidden but also revealed God. Being an obligatory attitude for any profound intuition of the essential divine mystery, apophaticism thus becomes a pneumatic realism, equally distanced from sterile psychol-

53 St. Gregory Palamas, *Capita*, apud. Krivoshein, [“The Ascetic and Theological Teachings of St. Gregory Palamas”] in *E[astern] C[hurches] Q[uiarterly]*, no. 3, July 1938, p. 139.

54 Theophanes, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

55 *Ibidem*. The same idea of a certain communicability of divine essence is expressed by St. Gregory Palamas in the homily at *The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple*, where he said that by following the path of hesychia “we get to touch in a way the Holy and untouchable Divine Nature.”

ogy and the subtleties of discursive intellectualism. Being moves within the plane of this realism, having possibilities for knowledge, living, and even expression structurally different from those experimented on the common coordinates of existence; it knows, sees, and feels beyond knowledge, sight, and sense. Nothing can more exactly reveal the essence and the meaning of this apophatic stage than its antinomic character. The first apophatic stage, negative theology, is expressed by the verbal constructions with "*hyper*," while the second stage, the existential apophaticism of contemplative prayer, is manifested as silence and profound peacefulness. Now, the third and final apophatic moment is realized in antinomic forms with special significance. The same "concealer of the Trinity,"^{xviii} St. Gregory Palamas, will allow us to understand the specific antinomy of this stage.

We must reaffirm that we are not in the realm of logical antinomies. For logical sensibility, two contradictory facts must alternate, each being able to manifest or develop its existence only at the expense of the other: an affirmation rejects a negation, and a negation rejects an affirmation. On the contrary, the "metaphysical" sensibility (using the word "metaphysical" in its strict understanding) considers the antinomy and the paradox as fundamental structures of the spiritual ascension of being: far from being obstacles, they are the vehicles of our infinite progress toward God. As we saw, this is possible only because there is a mysterious antinomic modality of the presence of Divinity itself, in its essence and uncreated energies. This is why St. Gregory Palamas brings to attention that, in order to rightly understand this fundamental theological antinomy, we must at the same time affirm not only the existence in God of substance and of energy as objectively different from each other, but also their inseparability, both in definition as in reality. Due to this distinction and inseparability, the Divine Being is at the same time incommunicable and still communicable. "Thus," St Gregory says, "we must maintain both affirmations and portray

them with all our piety, as a criterion for devotion.”⁵⁶ “For unity should not destroy distinction, nor distinction should contradict in any way unity, so that none would suffer because of the other.”⁵⁷

Thus, the essence of apophatic antinomy consists in its ontological character in virtue of which both terms are at the same time necessary and incompatible. Only such an antinomic structure resolves the problem of apophaticism, raising it without annulling it in an order of existence in which it no longer means pure and simple negation, but also affirmation of a real and efficient ontological participation to the Uncreated Being. Without this self-transcendence as the perspective that was opened by the beholding of uncreated energies, apophatic theology ends sooner or later either in a logical impasse of an agnostic type or, worse, in one of a theological nature, passing from a negative theology to a genuine negation of theology, as the contemporary Protestant theologians do today, being convinced that the transcendence of the Creator would suffer because of the concrete participation of a creature in His glory.

The major difficulty in accepting this final apophatic stage and especially its antinomic expression stems from the schematism of the usual logical frameworks that we employ in common understanding. This serious difficulty appears only in this moment. Before, discursive logic did not have great difficulties to accept the dialectic of negative theology or to approve the profound silence in which the apophaticism of contemplative prayer was expressed. Now, however, thinking experiences a new crucifixion: it intuits its own limits in this place. Apophatic antinomy violently breaks the continuity of thinking, forcing logic to recognize the juxtaposition of thesis and antithesis, but

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, *Act. con.*, 135, p. 144.

also the impossibility of their harmonious resolution, as it happens in a dialectic antinomy. The dialectic opposition of thesis and antithesis is suppressed in synthesis. For dialectic, then, there is always the possibility of resolution; it also presents purely and simply a procedure of opening and developing due to contradictions. (In this sense, dialectic is only a different form of “natural” development.) In apophatic antinomy, however, “yes” and “no” stay next to one another and call each other with necessity; an affirmation regarding one term brings the negation of the same thing by the correlative term. Nevertheless, the value and significance of antinomy stand in this essential-paradoxical structure. It shows itself as the logical expression of the cross, the crucial disposition of the intellect, and it is a scandal for reason precisely because of this. Just like the cross leads the entire human being, apophatic antinomy leads thinking on peaks from where the perspectives are directly open toward the abyssal mystery of Divine Being as well as of human being. There, the usual logic (let us call it cataphatic) senses some vertiginous meanings. However, even if the simple and easy resolution of an antinomy is always suspect because it is not a genuine antinomy, it does not follow that an unresolved antinomy is an *aporia*, nor that logic is totally, brutally, and unjustifiably sacrificed before an antinomy. On the contrary, it could be said that nothing is more logical than recognizing the structure of this antinomy which claims to exist only as antinomy. Such recognizance expresses an act of logical objectivity, of respecting the being proper to antinomy. Even more, it is precisely reasons of profound logic, of “ontological” logic, we would say, that impose the acceptance of apophatic antinomy, intuiting in it a final truth. For the ultimate regions of existence—and *a fortiori* for those who go beyond existence—antinomy remains the only form of “logical” expression, if logic still continues to mean the comprehension of the sense (of the *lógos*) of reality. “To affirm at a certain moment one thing and then another,” St. Gregory Palamas says, when both af-

firmations are true, is the path of any sensible theologian. But to say something contradictory in itself means to proceed as someone deprived of reason.⁵⁸

In order to speak more concretely—and in order to end with a clarification—we must say that the antinomism of the final apophatic stage opens again the problem of the relation between apophatic and cataphatic theologies, in its deepest implications. Although it neither contradicts nor denies the value and justification of cataphatic theology,⁵⁹ apophatic theology is something more than a simple correlative of cataphatic theology and is essentially different from it, especially its last expression.

In cataphatic theology, so characteristic to Western scholasticism, the notions of God, substance, and essence are identical with that of “being,” conceived as perfect and absolute. As a consequence, all of God’s attributes and perfections are nothing more than attributes and perfections deduced analytically from the notion of being. Without a doubt, they must be understood analogically and not literally, but this does not change too much the vision that stays at the basis of the cataphatic mode. Thus, God’s unity and absolute simplicity are deduced from the notion of “perfect being.” At the same time, this perfect being is presupposed as remaining within the domain of logic. In other words, the cataphatic theologians conceive the fundamental laws of logic, understood as ontological and ideal basis of being, as being applied to God (because He also is Being), and even having their final foundation in Him. (Another problem opens here, one that underlies that which we have already discussed. We will only mention it here: the problem of the relation between logic and ontology, a relation conceived and resolved differently in

58 *Capita—op. cit.*, p. 152.

59 This is what St. Gregory Palamas also affirms explicitly—*Capita, ibid.*, p. 155.

apophaticism and cataphatism.) Due to this, the proponents of cataphatic theology are inclined to consider that any objective distinction in God—which they interpret as distinction by separating some “parts” ontologically different from the whole—is incompatible with the idea of its absolute perfection.⁶⁰ Each “part” is smaller than the whole and, as a consequence (according to the categories of logic), necessarily less perfect than it. God’s absolute perfection is destroyed in this way. Of course, the notion of antinomism, which is foreign to such a theology, appears here as an imperfection of the theological thought and construction. However, a research led by an elementary objectivity forces us to recognize that antinomic apophaticism is consubstantial to any fundamental theological truth. This is the case for the dogma of Tripersonal Divinity that brings together antinomically the notions of trinity and unity. This is also the case for the teaching of the Church about the incarnate divine Logos, with His unique hypostasis and two natures, divine and human, where the unity of the person coexists antinomically with the duality of natures. Finally, this is also the case for St. Gregory Palamas’s doctrine on divine “supra-essence” and its energies, on their identity but also difference, on their communicable-incommunicable nature, apprehensible-inapprehensible.⁶¹ Being aware of the apophatic essence of any profound theological thought, St. Gregory Palamas

60 St. Gregory Palamas was already accused in this manner by his contemporary opponents who, being impregnated by Thomistic scholasticism, saw an objective dietism in the doctrine of the Saint. The modern Catholics maintain the objection in almost the same form. (See M. Jugie: “Palamas et La Controverse Palamite,” *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, tome XII, coll. 1735–1818, and Séb. Guichardan: *Le problème de la simplicité divine en Orient et Occident au XIV^e siècle*, Lyon, 1933).

61 See Krivoshein, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

is also aware of the inadequacy of our expressions in communicating ultimate realities: only antinomism allows this, by being affirmation and negation at the same time and crucially so. Thus, mentioning in conformity with the spirit of apophatic theology that the notions of being, essence, substance etc. applied to God are not mistaken, St. Gregory, the “Doctor of the ineffable,” emphasizes that they are still inexact and relative and do not define God as He is in Himself, for God is not being (although He is perfect), but transcends being as its Creator (even if this term does not succeed in expressing God as He is).⁶² Thus, the

62 The affirmations of all great doctrinal and spiritual authorities of Catholicism regarding the supreme mystery of Divine Being leave an odd and awkward impression at times. The attitude of scholastic and post-scholastic theology is so impregnated by an extremist cataphatism that, according to the sharp theological-speculative analysis, Divinity is conceived as quasi-abstraction, deposed of any trace of mystery. For example, see the work of P. Gardeil, *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*, Paris, 1927, Gabalda, 2 vol., uncontestedly the most profound and graceful presentation of Thomist spirituality in contemporary Western theology. There are claims of this kind: “...on pouvait regarder l'intelligence divine comme constituent la nature propre de Dieu,” I, 388; “la grâce (quality newly created) participe l'intelligence divine subsistante laquelle constitue le formel de la Nature de Dieu,” I, 390; “l'intelligence divine, rendue à son maximum d'actualité, constitue la nature divine,” *ibidem*. The essence of Divinity, “la Déité telle qu'elle est en soi” (I. 388), even if non sharable, is still conceivable and can be logically expressed: it is the “aseity” (*ibid.*) [the quality by which a being exists in and of itself – *translator's note*]. In such a doctrinal environment, dominated by the logical categories of “common sense,” it will not be very surprising to find the same incomprehensive attitude even for the so evidently apophatic structure of the dogmas. Acknowledging that the object of dogma cannot be conceived or understood by human reason, St. Thomas Aquinas (*Sum. Theol.*, I p., q. 32—a 1–2) continues to analyze our relations with dogma in the same ex-

being's attributes^{xix} cannot be taken purely and simply and transformed in attributes of the Divinity, as it is done cataphatically. The fundamental laws of logic can be applied to God only in a very small measure, and this is precisely because of their existential, and thus creational, character. Without a doubt, God is not below the categories of logic (as He is not below being, in the sense of non-being). Instead, He transcends them. As a consequence, our conceptions about Him must be necessarily antinomic. This apophatic antinomy (which, once again, should not be confused with an ordinary dialectic antinomy) is not only the expression of our mind's inability to comprise divine nature, but it is also objectively founded by God Himself as ineffably existing in Him, independently of the knower (as, for example, Divinity is Trinity objectively and independently of creation). It is not by hazard that the Absolute Being is designated especially by antinomic predications; the mystery of the idea that God stays "beyond the wall of the unity of contraries," as Nicolaus Cusanus used to say, is expressed by these predications. Ordinary logical knowledge—naturally cataphatic—operates by concepts and is subjected to the limiting laws of logic, especially to the principle of non-contradiction, the supreme pride and force of clear and distinct reasons. However, the same knowledge, although useful concerning the secondary and conceivable realm of existence, becomes inad-

clusivist cataphatic spirit. If we cannot understand the object of dogma, he says, this is because, under our imperfect formulas, the infinite is actually reality, and it also necessarily escapes our concepts made for the finite. "However, if the object of dogma is unthinkable, it is not also incognoscible, for we can reach it as conclusion due to our real and verifiable facts that give us the premises of our reasoning" (J. Chevalier. "Retour de la pensée moderne au réalisme chrétien," in *La Renaissance religieuse*, Paris, 1928, Alcan, p. 179).

equate for the primordial dimensions of that which is beyond category, dimensions developed beyond and above this existence. In Absolute, the principle of contradiction loses its efficacy: objective by excellence, it expresses the naturalist thinking of the eternal Aristotle: the central principle says, “*a* is *a* and not *b*.” Absolute Being is not, however, an object or a subject; it is not “something”: not *A*, nor *B*. Thus, for the Absolute, the principle of contradiction loses its meaning and value: from this perspective, the theological antinomy can no longer be accused of illogicality.⁶³ On the contrary, as we said above, it is the ex-

63 St Gregory Palamas says: “Teaching about God tells us some truths about Him in unitary fashion, and others in a distinct one. It is not allowed to distinguish those that are united, nor to confuse those that are separated. The one who opposes those to the others and tries to abolish some of them by the others—to those who believe that God is one have as opposite the distinction, and those who see the things separated in God have as opposition His unity and non-division, thinking that he would demonstrate that Christians are polytheists, that one should know that he uses the statements of the Spirit against the Spirit, just as the Greek scholars used creation against the Creator. He should also know that, being more ignorant than anyone else—according to the words of the Apostle—he does not understand that negations are not opposed to affirmations in those regarding God. He is existent and non-existent, everywhere and nowhere, with many names and without name, always moving and unmoved; briefly, He is everything and nothing. The things which appear to be opposed to one another, refusing any connection, are appeased in God and find themselves together, being still true” (a more extended apology in *op. cit.*, p. LIX). The lines above can be considered a real definition of antinomic apophaticism: antinomy appears here as the necessary category of formulas about God, in a moment when negations are concomitant with affirmations that are as entitled and obligatory about Divine Being which is, in itself, beyond both of them.

pression of a *sui generis* logical realism, a pneumatophore pragmatism which, to say everything, can be fully understood and accepted only from an eschatological perspective. This means that only the profound spiritual experience by which the frameworks of the present age are interiorly and genuinely exceeded and the brightness of Resurrection is anticipated, only this experience offers the unique knowledge and feeling of this apophatic stage.

To summarize the content and the significance of theological apophaticism in a few essential moments, we could say the following:

1. In theology, the apophatic attitude has a double meaning and a double determination. First, it appears as a necessary expression of essential inadequacy between the knowing subject and the transcendent and absolutely heterogeneous "Object" of knowledge. From this point of view, apophaticism is determined especially by subjective conditions, that is by the inability of our intellect to grasp the God Who reveals Himself as a total alterity, even for an intellectual being; a little more, the inability subsists even in the moment of profound prayer, when a being has gone beyond the intellectual instrumentations and is approaching God by interior contemplation: the Divinity remains an alterity, perceived as ineffable silence. Second, however, theological apophaticism presents an objective value, which opens unique perspectives for understanding Divine Being and its relations with a human being, but also the understanding of human being itself. This returns to acknowledging a superessential apophatic dimension, newly discovered as existing in the Divine Being independently of the existence of the knowing subject. The entire apophatic theology, starting from its first still neutral stage—negative theology itself—is only ascension that is filled with presentiments and intuitions at every step toward the ultimate "abyssal mystery" of the Deification about which the Holy Fathers speak. In the first apophatic moment—the Areopagitical negative dialectic—the divine objective apophaticism was perceived as trans-

intellectuality that was inaccessible to discursive notions; they could only suggest it at most. The second moment—of contemplative prayer—accomplished an existential intuition of the superessential mystery discovered now as ineffability, as silence. The divine apophatic mystery is revealed in the plenitude of its mysterious structure only in the third moment, the apophatic antinomism; however, this revelation does not cancel the mystery. In this stage, Divinity is revealed as essence and energy, identical and separated, communicable and incommunicable. At the same time, at this level of supra-ontological apophatic structure, the human being is articulated with the depth of divine mystery in order to become really and effectively knowing of and participative in divine nature. Paradoxically, in its own core, apophaticism is exceeded. Better said, new possibilities of knowing and expressing are now opened to it. These possibilities are, of course, necessarily antinomic, but still adequate to their content, more than in the first and second apophatic stages, constituted under the sign of direct or indirect negation.⁶⁴ In this sense, apophaticism can be considered as the place and form of an epigenetic process of revealing certain real and objective aspects of the mystery of the Godhead and, together with this, of the rapports between God and creature; this

64 In this stage (consecutive to internal prayer and solidary with it), God is a concrete participant in His luminous uncreated energies: “even if the creature will have communion with the supernatural vision of God,” St. Gregory Palamas says, “not seeing the being of God, but seeing God as He reveals Himself in a fashion proper to him. This sight is not only a sight that consists in a negation of all (*katá apóphason*), for *the mind sees something* (A.S. underline); ... but even if sight is above knowledge by negation..., it still is unuttered and above any name” (*The Second Treatise from the First Triad for Those who Give Themselves Piously to Hesychia*, apud. Stăniloae, p. XVI).

revelation culminates with the supreme moment of deification by the uncreated energies of grace.

2. The above aspect of the problem of apophaticism leads us further to considering another major sense of the apophatic attitude. Formally, it would seem it is rather a psychological and not a pneumatic question: we consider especially the incidence between the apophatic theological moment and the attitude toward the mystery of the Godhead. Obviously, we are not interested here in the psychological tremor of mystery, nor in its affective, moral, and even psychopathological consequences; all of these are just superficial points of view that result from the lack of precise and essential comprehension. However, God's mystery beyond nature is for any theological conscience (and even less, for any human conscience) the central element around which the "theoretical" (better said dogmatic) framework of spiritual experience and spiritual experience in its entire complexity are structured. In principle, any theological view worthy of its name starts from the implicit conviction that the Supreme Being is and remains for us an absolute mystery. However, uttered only in this way, the above principle remains still neutral and theoretical, because starting from this moment only can one posit the true problem of the attitude toward the Godhead eternally, beyond mystery—in other words, the problem of the just rapport between being and Divine mystery. Here, the points of view are varied: from postulating a total agnosticism to conceiving divine mystery as a simple extension of the infinite of data present also within the finite, there is space for a large range of very different positions. Despite all of this (or especially because of this), the option (this term must be understood as organic orientation, and not as a deliberately rational act) for one position or the other cannot be an indifferent act. On the contrary, as we were saying above, the content and the configuration of religious life in its entirety will depend only on intuiting a human being's correct attitude toward the superessential mystery of the Godhead. In other

words, it returns to accepting the primordially of the problem of knowledge and of God's real, concrete, and effective participation, without annulling *ipso facto* the connatural mystery of Divine Being. Grasping from the beginning the importance of this problem, orthodox theology formulated the problem and its solution at the same time, affirming together with Evragrius Ponticus and St. Maximus the Confessor that "knowing the mystery of the Trinity and its plenitude means to enter in perfect union with God, to touch the deification of human creature, so to enter in divine life, in the life of the Holy Trinity, becoming partakers of divine Nature."⁶⁵ However, as it is easily observable, the expression above illustrates powerfully the apophatic vision, containing and expressing in its germs the doctrine of essence and uncreated energies as the only authentic solution for our rapport to the mystery of the Godhead. The absence of apophaticism (especially of this last apophatic stage) and the cataphatization to the limit of theology are not only a pitiful action for a metaphysical sensibility. It also menaces the ontological and pneumatic foundations of our supreme realization—the deification of creature. We saw how a strictly cataphatic attitude tends to replace the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the abstract God of philosophies even on the Christian sky (footnote 64); as a consequence, in the eyes of such a theology our deification will appear only as a "faint poem,"⁶⁶ and the ensemble of our relations with

65 Lossky, p. 65.

66 This almost unbelievable expression belongs to Rivière (*Le dogme de la Rédemption*, Ed. Gabalda, Paris, 1931), who is a celebrity in soteriology and one of the leading figures of contemporary Catholic theology. Despite its apparent gravity, the above formula is not so scandalous, if we take into account the context in which it was uttered. The same exaggeratedly cataphatic attitude of Catholic theology empties the notion of deification and its concrete content

God, so religious life, will necessarily take on a preponderantly ethical, rational, and juridical structure, and not a mystical, intuitive, and pneumatic one, which is the characteristic of a spiritual experience which unfolds in the chiaroscuro of mystery. It is clear, of course, that the last position is proper to Orthodox spirituality, as the first is specific to Catholicism (true, not in the entirety of its doctrinal and practical being, but rather as a prevalence of

(which is the divine mystery in action) and make it be considered a figure of speech; in other words, the reality of deification is not negated in itself, for its “materiality” is undisputable; however, being conceived in terms coming from logic (grace—created quality that is inherent to the soul—participates in divine intelligibility, See Gardeil, *loc. Cit.*), deification is integrated and subordinated to an ampler view of salvation, view that can be described in general as juridical. Of course, from this point of view the concept of deification hides within itself a latent contradiction (only the explicit antithesis of Catholicism, so Protestantism, could explain it), for there cannot be authentic deification where there is no real and “substantial” communication of the Godhead—without having God fully participated or known by it (for in this case it would no longer be God); in the absence of a solution necessarily apophatic, deification remains either an external, analogical, and formal participation, maintaining ontologically an asymptotic distance between us and God (from here, a “faint poem”), or, as in Protestantism, a tragic impossibility. (It is significant that, in Catholicism, it was not possible to construct a clear and complete doctrine about grace, the agent of deification, even if there is a considerable number of theological opinions about it, but none that could satisfactorily represent the essential problem of the nature of grace; on the contrary, and this is also significant, Orthodoxy, which left several truths of religious experience non-dogmatized and non-systematized formally, took care to clarify first of all and in definitive terms the notion of “deification,” underlying its concrete reality based on the apophatic doctrine of uncreated energies.)

a tendency). Apophaticism remains then the connatural attitude of any proximity to the great mysteries, to the ultimate stages of being, so that it could be said that it alone leads to the deepest and most fecund spiritual experiences⁶⁷: between apophatic theology and sterile theology, it is almost impossible to have an intermediary.

67 The problem of the relation between the content of the spiritual experience and the ensemble of dogmatic and mystical principles that found it and that provide the dimensions on which it unfolds also opens important perspectives for the theme that interests us. Between the spiritual doctrine and its practical realization, a bi-univocal determinism functions. It is not, of course, of a psychological nature (the psychological stage is completely exterior to the spiritual order), but rather an expression of pneumatic life in which “theory” and practice make up a single body. Even if any authentic spiritual experience aspires to the same purpose, the participation in Divinity, there still are differentiations that copy for the practical order the differences that are already existent in the order of principles. This is done in such a way that a certain doctrinal attitude brings with itself an appropriate concrete resolution: the “theoretical” vision is the one that establishes the conditions, the modalities, and even the limits of spiritual experience. The same supreme “Object” of mystical life is perceived and understood differently according to the personal index of refraction. As we saw, this index is determined by the respective doctrinal framework. St. Thomas Aquinas expresses this when he affirms, “*quidquid recipitur admodum recipientis recipitur*”; again, this means that a spiritual life, a personal life by excellence, is conditioned by one’s own possibilities of apprehension. But it so happens that where a certain doctrinal attitude fixes more reduced possibilities of grasping Divine Being, another doctrine may allow a more profound and more fecund experience of the mystery of Divinity, which is revealed to each “according to how much each is able.” This fact explains certain particularities of mystical experience in different doctrinal ambiances (for example, “the mystical nights” and the stigmas in Catholicism). It also suggests the possibility of

3. However, perhaps the place where the entire problem of apophaticism obtains its strongest and most characteristic frame is the one where the problem of the ontological (and even supra-ontological) relations between man and God is posited vividly and concretely. One could say that, in fact, this is the distinction and major function of apophatic theology: to ensure a just mode of profound meeting between Creator and His creature. The notion of “deification” introduces us directly in the essence of this ultimate significance of apophaticism because, in its deepest reality, man’s meeting with God takes on the aspect of deification, and deification appears on its turn as an essentially apophatic structure.⁶⁸

We saw how the first apophatic stage, negative theology, presented a discursive sense for the problem of the relation man-God, operating at the intellectual level of being. The moment of contemplative prayer (the second stage of apophaticism) led to the threshold of the effective union with Divinity, realizing the internal preliminaries of this act. Further, the third moment, the one of antinomic apophaticism, establishes the framework in which the deifying communication between God and being takes

establishing a typology and an *a priori* hierarchy of the mystical fact, taking in consideration the degree of depth and the capacity of apprehension of the mystery that the respective spiritual doctrines prove to have. The vision of antinomic apophaticism accomplishes, as it seems to us, the most comprehensive (and most humble) attitude before the superessential mystery of God, and so establishes the optimal conditions for the deepest spiritual experiences (St. Maximus the Confessor also says that we must find “as cause for the continual change of God’s appearances the disposition of those He cares for”; “God is described every time... according to the state in which man finds himself.” *Filocalia* III—*Qu. ad. Thal.*, 28., p. 107) [in the Humanitas edition, 2004, pp. 117–8].

68 See André Scrima, “O expunere sintetică a Isihasmului” in *Despre isihasm* (*On Hesychasm*, pp. 137–147 (note A. G.).

place. At this level, the meeting with God is made beyond the intellectual level and even exceeding the stage of internal prayer; now, creature meets its Builder in light. The luminous character of the deifying union is the expression of the real apprehension of the Divine Being, since the nature of this light transcends any created essence and, at the same time, the proof of the actual communication of God to His creature that has become luminous too. St. Symeon the New Theologian says, "We do not speak of things of which we are ignorant, but we bear witness to that which we know. [...] God is Light, and those whom He makes worthy to see Him, see Him as Light; those who receive Him, receive Him as Light. For the Light of His glory goes before His face, and it is impossible that He should appear otherwise than as light."^{69xx} Nothing is more proper to the spirit and the letter of antinomic apophaticism than the supreme pneumatic experience of uncreated light: the creature is transformed in "God according to grace" by its own amalgamation with divine energies, remaining however in its ontological essence of a human creature. A human being becomes apt to be called by divine names ("when I became bent, He gave me bent names," St. Symeon says in Hymn I). This is of course not in absolute fashion, but still proper and adequate, so that the description of this superlative stage is necessarily presented antinomically.

What are the consequences for our theme? First, apophaticism is not equivalent with inherent "ignorance," nor with a unilateral negation of the possibilities of knowing Being. On the contrary, in its supreme degree, it appears as an effective and communicable gnosis, founded on the creature's new possibilities of understanding and

69 St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Homily LXXIX*, Russian edition from Mt. Athos, p. 318, see Lossky, p. 31.

communicating, since it has all of his profound potentialities actualized.

Second, the consistent apophatic gnosis is revealed as consubstantial with antinomy, so with the way of transposing the given reality to another realm of existence, beyond the common categories of negation and affirmation, where created being is truly united with the Creator. This union can only be experienced and expressed antinomically. The union between man and God unfolds and is formulated antinomically. The terms of the relationship must be incompatible, for there subsists an absolute heterogeneity between them. However, this heterogeneity does not imply absolute separation. A human being can communicate with the Divine being, a creature can effectively be deified, without annulling this antinomy logically or, even less, ontologically. There is a principled, metaphysical interdiction against the possibility of a synthesis that would resolve and suppress antinomy at this ultimate stage. It does not establish only a distinction and an absolute differentiation, but it also expresses a real communication and an authentic unity between incompatible essences, which exists only as long as they are different (it could be said that even the concept of antinomy must be understood antinomically). The intimate mode of the union between man and God cannot be expressed only in positive terms (for these terms cannot suggest the mysterious essence of this act), not in negative terms only (for this would mean to empty experience of its concrete content). Since Divinity is participated at the level of its apophatical objective aspect, of the uncreated energies, the participating being also experiences and communicates antinomically its new way of existence.⁷⁰ In this way,

70 Here is a characteristic fragment from St. Symeon the New Theologian that illustrates this antinomic situation of a being that is transmuted in a new being by deification: "When we arrive at per-

a new perspective for understanding knowledge of God is opened; it is a perspective different from both the Areopagitic concept of “the coming out of itself” for perceiving the inaccessible Being (from where the cascade of successive negations resulted) and the vision of Evagrian intellectualism according to which (when it is understood too strictly) union with God is made by the interiorization of the contemplative *nous*. The doctrinal synthesis of this position (present in its germs at St. Gregory of Nyssa, foreseen by St. Maximus the Confessor, but defined definitive-

fection, he says, God no longer comes to us, as before, without image or appearance (as in the second stage, of inner prayer, *n.n.*). He comes with a certain image, but it is an image of God; for God could not appear under any image or figure; but he makes himself seen in his simplicity, formed in light without form, incomprehensible, ineffable (all apophatic negative names, *n.n.*). I can say no more. As he makes himself clearly seen, he is perfectly recognizable (positive affirmations, *n.n.*), speaks, and listens in a manner which cannot be expressed. He who is God by nature holds converse with those he has made gods by grace, as a man talks with his friends, face to face. He loves his sons like a father; he is loved by them without measure; he becomes a strange spectacle in them, a yet more awful hearing. They cannot speak of him as they should, but neither can they keep silence (the stage of antinomic apophaticism, *n.n.*)... The Holy Spirit becomes in them all that the Bible says about the Kingdom of God—the pearl, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven, the water, the fire, the bread, the life-giving draught, the couch, the marriage chamber, the bridegroom, the friend, the brother, the father” (*Homily XC*, Russian ed. from Mt. Athos, pt. II, pp. 488–9; See Lossky, *op cit*, pp. 229–230; English edition: pp. 231–2). Thus, at this supreme degree, apophaticism promises and even imposes positive affirmations, without eliminating by this the ineffable and cataphatically indeterminable mystery that continues to remain the essential nucleus of the pneumatic experience: the necessity of the antinomic form results from here.

ly by St. Gregory Palamas) is constituted as a pneumatophore realism around the notion of deification, in which being becomes subject of divine operations, without ceasing to be human, knows in God by clear knowledge which has as source and medium God Himself, and, "becoming a whole of God, he sees a divine light that is inaccessible to the senses because they are senses (but accessible to the deified sense)^{xxi}... without which the mind, united with those things above it, could not see, as the eye of the body could not see a sensible light."⁷¹ St. Symeon the New Theologian tells us, "this non faded light illumines us. It is unchanged, incorruptible, and never dark; it speaks, works, lives, and enlivens; it changes into light all those that it lights."⁷² The mode of the union with God is described

71 Stăniloae, p. LIII.

72 St. Symeon the New Theologian, *ibidem*. Due to the same misunderstanding of the significance of apophaticism, Hausherr affirms that the Hesychast theology of integral light almost eliminated the Dionysian apophatic shadow from his doctrine (see "Les orientaux connaissent-ils les Nuits de Saint Jean de la Croix?" [O[rientalia] C[hristiana] P[eriodica], vol. XII, np. 1-2, p. 45, Rome, 1946). In reality, Hesychasm is an apophatic spirituality by excellence. It maintains the inaccessibility and the incognoscibility of divine essence, but it also postulates its real communication (and not a "total ignorance of the essence," as Hausherr says in the same place), and this is eminently apophatic. On the other hand, we must take into consideration that Dionysus himself named darkness not by privation, but rather excess and luminous supra-essence. Thus, light was present even in the essence of Dionysian darkness (See Ps. 138:12: "For darkness shall not be dark because of You, and the night shall be bright as day; as its darkness, so also shall be its light"). In fact, Hausherr's opinion is determined by uncomprehending (perhaps even ignoring) the meaning of the last apophatic stage, which is expressed antinomically. On the contrary, it is clear that the experience of the uncreated light does not nullify apophaticism but rather categorically

here beyond the dehiscent ecstasy and the simple contemplative inwardness. It appears as a mysterious mixture of natures “in which we must come together while we distinguish among us and distinguish while we unite.” Anticipating to some extent the next chapter, we note that the unifying experience of uncreated light requires the same expression used for the Chalcedonian dogma of communication of idioms—the archetype and principle by excellence of any profound encounter between human and divine natures. The union is accomplished without fusion or division, without separation or change. Apophaticism reveals here its deepest meaning, its crucial inner face: it is a reflex in the doctrinal order of the “deepest mystery of the cross”—this mysterious icon from which the only way of God’s work in the world is revealed to the world. On the antinomic arms of this icon, a human being meets his Creator, eternally dying in God in order to rise and live eternally in Him. The apophatic antinomism accurately represents a “*via crucis*” for a being’s spiritual ascension.

Finally, in order to end our brief research on theological apophaticism, we must mention a final consequence of the apophatic attitude, due to and by which the divine abyss is articulated with the human abyss. The notion of deification is revealing for this aspect as well because it reveals to us the human’s aptitude to truly become a receptive subject of divine life, to be *capax Dei*. In this way and at this level, the entire problem moves its center of gravity from the theological realm to the anthropological one, becoming a problem regarding the profound structure of man. Without a doubt, the human compound in its entirety, that is the substantial human united in body and

presupposes it. Knowledge of divine light is not total and exhaustive as cataphatic knowledge (even if, for maintaining the antinomy, we must say that it is still effective and complete at the same time).

soul, is called to have communion with the divine life brought on earth by the Savior Christ, and then to taste its complete perfection in heaven. However, a human being involves a mysterious nucleus, the true deiform center of its existence and from where spiritual life irradiates, transfiguring and deifying body and soul. A pneumatic life of man would not be possible unless there are two people within his still unitary and unique being: a hidden, invisible, and inner one, and a visible, palpable, and exterior one. They are identical antinomically and also different antinomically. We could even go as far as to affirm that a human being would be impossible without an apophatic structure, so without a mysterious and ineffable nucleus that would ensure its ontological value and consistence. An existence that would be reducible to external data and exhausted through this data would be sooner or later dissolved in the flux of natural reality, losing its autonomy and profound significance. As there is an abyssal mystery of the inaccessible Divinity manifested "*ad extra*" by its operation, there is also a deepness of the inner man which dwells in man's hidden essence that is revealed exteriorly by his acts. As there is a "*Deus absconditus*" that refuses cataphatic determinations, there is also a "*homo absconditus*" that cannot be caught in limited concepts. As there is an apophatic theology that leads to the deepest mysteries of God, there must be an apophatic anthropology that would lead to the deepest mystery of man, this created god. In order to clarify even better our thought, we must specify that this is not about the psychological structure and interiority of man. Regardless of how deep and "incognoscible" this would be, the psychological structure still belongs to the being that is exterior, observable, and expressible in positive predicaments. Thus, the psychologist can never be the proper receptor of profound divine communication. For this, we have the human apophatic level of which we speak, the only one that can stay before God "as another god." Then, we also have to emphasize that the apophatic approaches for intuiting the inner man will re-

produce—*mutatis mutandis*—the steps of theological apophaticism. Thus, they will appear as negation of the positive qualifications of the exterior man in a first stage, realizing than the moment of aneidetic apprehension of profound internal silence, in which the being that is hidden in depths appears at the surface, shining as the sun, becoming thus visible in the unfaded light of Divinity through which it also is deified, although it remains a human more than any other time.⁷³ Of course, expressed in this way, the problem of apophatic anthropology appears very vast and implies any spiritual or mystical act of a being. In fact, orthodox patristic intuited that the anthropological dimension is the fundamental category of existence, revealed as such by the Son of God and the Son of incarnated man.⁷⁴ For the beginning, though, it is necessary to establish the notion and the object of apophatic anthropology, as a prolegomena to any ulterior research.

Concluding what we stated above, we could say that the object of apophatic anthropology is determining and presenting the apophatic structure of being, that is the grasping (of course: *more apophatico*) of the hidden man as subject of our profound pneumatic life. Two main moments follow from here: first, the research of the foundations of anthropological apophaticism (in other words, the indication of the elements that justify the application of the apophatical mode to the human category); second, the description of the structure of *homo absconditus*, a necessari-

73 See St. Macarius of Egypt, Homily V.4. St. Maximus the Confessor also says, "The one deified remains fully human in soul and body because of his nature, but he becomes fully God in soul and body because of grace." P. Staniloae, *Viața și învățătura Sf. Grigore* (*The Life and the Teachings of St. Gregory*), Sibiu, 1938, p. 244.

74 The most complete patristic anthropological synthesis is presented especially by St Maximus the Confessor. See Hans Urs von Balhasar, *Die kosmische Liturgie*. Freiburg im Breisgau, 1941.

ly more extended operation because, as we will see, there is a true “mystical body” of man, with its specific centers and levels. For the Holy Fathers and for all spiritual writers, the reality of the mysterious human is obvious—and it could not be otherwise. They live fully the truth that a being exists only because it is present in its ineffable ontological center, from where it can truly and profoundly know God, love Him, and move within Him. A spiritual man is the one who has penetrated to the “*individuum inefabile*” and known the mysterious name of the victors of whom the Apocalypse says, “To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”⁷⁵

3. The Foundations of Anthropological Apophaticism

If we tried to grasp the formal element, the “style” of apophatic attitude, on the basis of our previous considerations, we should perhaps say that the apophatic view is in fact congenial with the sense of mystery.^{xxii} Faced with a mysterious presence, perceived vividly because it truly is participative and, at the same time, essentially inexhaustible by positive determinations, our spirit can only choose the apophatic path, the only path that saves the authenticity of personal experience and also the autonomy of the intuited object. It is perhaps in this second moment that we find a particularly valuable element of the apophatic spirit.

It is indeed necessary that the mystery which constitutes the term of apophatic knowledge maintains its mysterious being unaltered in order to ensure the infinite increase and concrete enrichment in God that is experienced by the being engaged in a great and ineffable rhythm of existence. In this profound realm of realities,

75 *Rev.* 2:17.

mystery is not a hostile presence, an opaque reality functioning only with a negative meaning, as a zone of obscurity or as a residuum of inherent irrationality.⁷⁶

Without a doubt, there are also mysteries that are consequences of some more or less temporary, more or less accidental psychological inaptitudes in extracting the entire juice of knowledge from a given reality until its complete exhaustion. Positive, experimental sciences do nothing else in their effort but limit continually the quantity of relative mysteries that they encounter. The purport and the content of scientific activity are the perpetual overcoming of these mysteries. However, the mystery that is present in the center of apophatic knowledge, the mystery that animates and justifies it, has nothing in common

76 This is how P. Garrigou-Lagrange presents the mystery of our individuality, the principle of individuation (see P. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le sens du mystère et le clair-obscur intellectuel*, Paris 1934, p. 15 and 135 sq.); this mystery results from the presence of matter, the principle of individuation in a human being. This ineffable obscurity “*d’en bas*” comes from blind, obscure matter which is repulsive in a way to intelligibility, which was obtained by the abstraction of matter, because matter is at the inferior borders of being and intelligibility. As it can be seen, P. Garrigou-Lagrange represents here the perspective of Thomistic Aristotelianism (in fact, he cites the respective passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*). The conception about the inherent unintelligibility of matter, justified in the ancient view of the eternity of matter, which is understood as a demi-nothingness, is no longer applicable in the Christian doctrine. Here, matter is also God’s creation, and so it necessarily bears divine meanings and reasons which are hidden in things. It is odd how modern Thomism continues to maintain a theory which makes an individual be the result of the fall of an idea into essentially unintelligible matter, and thus transforms him in a “pariah” of existence. One of the inconsistencies of the composite style of Thomistic doctrine is revealed here (for the historical aspect, see also Landry, *Duns Scot* [Paris, 1922]).

(except the name) with the elastic and inevitable impersonal obstacle that limits common knowledge. This mystery is manifested as an essentially and autonomously mysterious reality, without preventing knowledge in any way. *Au contraire*, this imposes and organizes a specific kind of knowledge, with a proper profile and content, which cannot be despised. A mystery that remains unknown by definition, but is not unintelligible, is a fact that the Cartesian superstition of clear and distinct ideas will not easily accept. However, in expressing concretely, even on a logical level, this paradoxical structure of mystery, the apophatic antinomy becomes also a metaphysical category that confers new valences to knowledge. One must abandon (of course, only from a certain level of realities) the prejudice that mystery functions always and exclusively as opacity and refusal. *Au contraire*, mystery is revealed as the dynamic, fecund element that commands the anagogical tension of profound knowledge. One can easily suspect why the pneumatic realities experienced within the Church are situated on a level where everything moves in the chiaroscuro of mystery: especially in Eastern Orthodoxy, the spiritual experience lives and is fulfilled from this presence of an ineffable and still cognoscible mystery without which everything, including obvious things, would be incomprehensible. In the spiritual order, clarity is not the attribute of the violent light of rational, diurnal senses, but the expression of quiet understanding of crepuscular, undying light in which the clarity of knowledge is mixed with the shadow of mystery. In a lapidary and perfect formula, St. Isaac of Syria does not tire to repeat that "spiritual knowledge is the perception of the mysteries."^{xxiii}

In the apophatic view, mystery is revealed as a constitutive category of any existence, even a created one, not only the divine one. This is normal if we consider that any reality can become an object of natural contemplation, so the place for a presence of a divine direction (God's reasons in things). Dwelling on reality, our spirit discerns the characteristic properties of objects, which leads to the

formation of the respective concepts. However, this logical-analytical operation will never consume the profound ontological content of realities, their inexpressible conceptual substance, their indefinable essence. Writing against Eunomius, St. Basil affirmed that “divine essence, but also created essences themselves cannot be known and expressed with the help of concepts.”⁷⁷ Contrary to the spontaneous “eunomism” of rational knowledge that pretends to be exhaustive, one can talk then about an expansion of the categories of apophaticism to any act of profound knowledge, be it “natural” or “supernatural.” The most humble existence, inasmuch as it is an existence, is constituted around a nucleus of mystery which forms its very ultimate essence, its specific “noumen.” Being the physical and metaphysical point of articulation of the created with the Uncreated, a human cannot lack his mysterious interiority that exceeds and refuses the cataphatic notional determinations and also establishes his real communication with the Divine. Even if only from a logical perspective, it could be said that the existence of an apophatic structure of a human being can be deduced a priori from the notion of man (considered, of course, under a larger framework than the naturalist one). A human has a life that is as unique and personal as there is none other within creation. He was originally conceived and realized by God as an autonomous existence, as an “absolute” existence in his order of realities. From the beginning, God entrusted man to himself: the mystery of the original sin uncovers with an unsurpassed power the tragic greatness of human autonomy, which is unlimited even within its dependence on the Creator. This unique ontological regime would not have been possible without the presence of a mysterious center, an interior core that is

77 *Adversus Eun.*, I. 1, c. 6, P.G., 29, col. 521–524; I. II, c. 4, col. 577–580 and chapter 32, col. 648.

inaccessible to external limitations and that would raise man above nature, keeping him eternally present to himself and to God. If our being was reduced to a "pure" natural existence only, an existence deprived of that interior "centrosphere" of its apophatic structure, it would not resist for long to the wear of the external life and would soon lose its specific ontological constancy, so its essence of human. It would be melted in the ocean of strictly natural existence, where all personal forms are swallowed and disappear. Man does is not defeated by the "metaphysical weariness" of his immanent duration because, according to St. Paul's word, "even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."⁷⁸ The antinomic presence of two people within the same being (without, of course, breaking its real unity) confers man all the qualifications of an apophatic existence, in the likeness of his Creator, who is also revealed in his absolute unity, as an eternally hidden and ineffable supra-essence and as a universe of communicable and accessible exteriorizations.⁷⁹ Man's mysterious depth is not an impersonal abyss, the entrails of blind nature, but it is rather revealed as living presence, as "face," as "inner man," with a life having its own dimensions, accomplished beyond and above the natural one.

Thus, the original homeland of the mysterious man cannot be natural existence (again, this is not about a psy-

78 2 Cor. 4:16.

79 Eastern patristic preferred to attempt to understand the true nature of man by starting from the notion of God, in whose image man was created. Taking as basis what *Rev.* tells us about God, we will recover in man that which corresponds in him to the divine image (this is how St. Gregory of Nyssa proceeds, See Lossky, p. 110). Within this view, the problem of the apophatic man, a term correlated and corresponding to the apophatic God, asserts itself as necessary.

chological, instinctive, or irrational interiority), but he must come straight from the mysterious depth of his Creator who forged him in his likeness. The apophatic structure of a human being finds its first ground in this supreme dignity, in this presence of "God's image" in us—a notion filled with mysterious meanings.

Trying to speak about the vast problem of man's divine image means to bring into discussion large sectors of dogmatic and biblical theology; this is something that cannot be done here. Our analysis unfolds on a narrower level, grasping the general foundations of apophatic anthropology in this essential concept.

The patristic loci that discuss the image and likeness of God all begin, of course, from the sacred text of *Genesis*. The lines of this book are sealed with the Spirit's mystery and light, blowing a breath of eternity. We can distinguish within them two essential moments for understanding the unique being of man. First, we are told that man was made in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:26). This passage has an essential importance for Christian anthropology, constituting the fundamental concept of human ontology.

The second passage exposes the act of man's creation in its unfolding. The supernatural roots of being and the point of insertion of the human in the divine are revealed to us here. Man was made out of dust and made a living soul by the breath of the life giving Spirit (*Genesis* 2:7). Here are all the necessary elements for the orientation toward the mysterious depths of man. Solving his enigma rests in his mysterious essence of being an image, an icon of God. On this foundation of divine revelation, the Holy Fathers built a true ontology of the Edenic stage, of the creature's primordial state, a creature always understood as a living icon, eternally directed towards its Archetype. The theocentrism of the orthodox anthropological view has the meaning of a category that is immanent to the notion of man. The Eastern Fathers conceive man's focus on God not as a simple ethical orientation, as an external con-

formation of the being in relation to its Creator, but rather as an inherent feature of the established nature, owner by birth of a divine element imprinted to our dust by the very act of creation.⁸⁰ If there was need for a super-added gift to raise the human being from this state, as the post-Augustinian Western theology would claim later, then one can no longer speak of a mystical connaturality between man and Creator, but only of a collation, of an external correspondence with the model, which is not imprinted on the depths of human structure. Such a conception considerably diminishes the divine potential of being; this is why the metaphysical sensibility of the Eastern Fathers organically ignored the dehiscent anthropology of pure nature + *donum superadditum*. The connection that unites us with the Creator is a birthright, a gift of nature, an authentic reality of the natural and initially deiform soul, which allows for our immediate participation, our direct perception, and our living adherence to the Being of Beings. In a moving paragraph, St. Gregory the Theologian expresses the primordial ground for the kinship and ancient communion between man and God in this way, "Taking a part from the ground just created, the Word of God forged with his immortal hands our image and communicated life to it; the Spirit that he instilled in man is a beam from the unseen Divinity."⁸¹ Here, the Creator communicates to his beloved creature, to man (as in a "divine kiss") not a disposition and a norm for life,

80 See Lot-Borodine, "La Doctrine de la Grâce et de la Liberté dans l'Orthodoxie Gréco-Orientale." *Oecumenica*, sixth year, vol. V, pp. 1-3, 1939, London, pp. 16-19.

81 *Poemata dogmatica*, VIII, *Peri psychés*, vv. 70-75, P.G., t. 37, col. 412, *ap. Lossky, op. cit.*, p1. 111-112.

externally annexed to his being,⁸² but a prerogative that will be part of his nature, constituting his specific essence.

In this characteristically human moment of Genesis, God confers to the human creature the image as an ontological foundation of its existence. The divine icon in man is a constitutive (and not normative) idea, the original seed of his being, man's human category by excellence; however, at the same time and paradoxically, it also comes within his depths from another place, from the superessential depths of Divinity. Spiritually, the view of Easter anthropology is filled with audacious explanations of this revealing verse from *Genesis*. It also marks man's excellence and dignity in a more expressive, more vivid, and more profound way than the simple notion of rational animal, which is popularized by the Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy. Man's primordial mystery is noticed and indicated without fear, with a perfect spiritual lucidity, in his character of supra-created being, and not non-created. Of course, while we are in this limit zone of chiaroscuro, as we said above, it is very easy to fall to the temptation of a categorical affirmation and state directly, for example, that "man possesses in himself an uncreated principle."⁸³ However, doing this you do not clarify a mystery, but you rather reset the series of the dogmatic and logical difficulties of any pantheism. The mystery of the human being must be searched on deeper, antinomical dimensions. We must say that nature and supra-nature, human and divine, are intertwined in the profound structure of man without ever mixing. Making him initially a participant in the mystery of his own life, God snatches man, so to speak,

82 C. [M. J.] Scheeben [*La Dogmatique*, trad. De l'abbé P. Belet, 3 vol., Paris, 1877–1881] III, 494, on how Blessed Augustine conceives the primordial state when he says that "God, creating Adam, gave him 'the power to deserve' as an appendage to his nature."

83 Bulgakov, *Agnus Dei*, p. 59.

from the order of creation and adopts him in His bosom. He communicates to him something that does not come from the region of created nature. It is something supernatural, something divine, and so mysterious for the creature. The Holy Scripture itself calls man's vocation in the society to which man is destined to be with God a great mystery hidden in God, above all human conceptions (*John* 6 and 14–17; *Ephesians*, *Galatians* 4, 2 *Corinthians* 1–2). This would not make sense if it were reduced to something natural, which has its source and limits within the created order. Thus, in a sense, one can say that man is a created-uncreated being because of his “original mixture with God,”⁸⁴ of his intimate correlation and cohesion with Him,⁸⁵ which does not mean confusion of substances.

In fact, the concept of “image of God” is mysterious and antinomic because, properly speaking on the coordinates of common logic, there is nothing that can be similar to God. He remains absolutely a-categorical and thus absolutely dissimilar with His creature. However, the evidence of the image and likeness with God in man introduces the first apophatic element in a human being for it constitutes its ontological and metaphysical center, which is inaccessible and inexhaustible by cataphatic notions. Having its foundation in God's image in him, man is no longer man without his divine icon. The profound roots of our honest human existence must then be searched in this deep region where man's inward mysterious face is hidden. The innermost, the most personal, and the closest to man nucleus is at the same time someone else's property: God's

84 St. Gregory of Nyssa (*M. Cuv. Cateh.*, (*The Catechetical Oration*) trad. D. Cristescu and I Barbu, Bucharest, 1947, p. 36) says, “it was needed to mix a little part related to God with human nature.”

85 See P. Stăniloae, “Antropologie ortodoxă—comentarii asupra stării primordiale a omului.” *Anuarul Academiei teologice Andreiana*, Sibiu, 1940, p. 12.

property. In this sense, we can say together with Blessed Augustine, "*Deus est interior intimo meo.*"

Such a profound ontological intimacy between man and his Creator found its most adequate expression in a symbol, and not in a notion, in a positive determination. This symbol is the one of filiation. The concept of filiation brings to light perhaps the deepest aspect of the discussed problem. The sons are no longer foreign to the Father, but they rather inherit Him existentially (not only juridically). They inherit His dignity, image, and glory. Divine filiation, the dignity of being a son of God, was given *ipso facto* in the concrete origin of man, but it was realized plenarily by the incarnation of the Son of God. The union with God to which we are called by adoption is imitated after the natural union existing between God the Father and his Son. Thus, it can only be realized inasmuch God communicates to use his divine being and life. This idea leads to the notion of spiritual birth. A spiritual being represents a birth, and not a natural "creation." It comes from above, as an ontological transmutation of a creature. The text of the Holy Scripture abounds in unparalleled deep cues about this mysterious spiritual generation of a being⁸⁶ due to which the human race inherits the depths of divine eternity.⁸⁷

But let us return to the strict problem of the image. The filial participation of man to Divinity is originally consecrated by the sealing of our being with the image of the hidden God. Inwrought deeply in the substance of a human creature, to the point of compiling its ontological structure, this image maintains the entire abyssal mystery of the Supreme Being from where it originates and is

86 One can find an analysis of these in Scheeben, *op. cit.*, III, p. 471 sq.

87 "That where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

communicated to the new creature, man, who will maintain it from now on as his own mystery.

In this regard, St. Gregory of Nyssa notices, "The image must bear all the essential features of the Archetype; however, for God, incognoscibility is essential to his substance. This must be reflected in man's own incognoscibility, for he is an image of God."⁸⁸ Again, this inherent incognoscibility of our profound being must not be understood as infrarational or as subliminal opacity, but it transcends the conceptual categories, as a natural consequence of the internal apophatic structure on which man is based. The image of God in us—being the image of man at the same time—is manifested outwardly on a multiplicity of levels, on all dimensions of human existence. This is why it could be observed and described either as reason, or as free will, for indeed it is both, but also something different from them and beyond them. Beyond its polyvalent appearances, the divine image of man is hidden to external looks and understandings. It is precisely this mysterious interiority of his ontological center that ensures the unity of a human creature, unity that is transcendent to nature, and also its supra-creaturality. Paradoxically, man's image is always an antinomic unity of something that is manifested and something that remains hidden in and through manifestation. Even more, for St. John of Damascus, "the icon in itself is a manifestation and a declaration of what remains hidden."⁸⁹ In our case, this means that it is not possible and we should not separate violently and artificially the outward face from his inward, hidden image on which it is founded.

88 *De hominis opificio*, XVI, P.G., t. 44, col. 1184 A.C., P. de Lubac, p. 295 sq. See also St. Maximus the Confessor: "For none of the creatures knows itself..."

89 *De imaginibus*, III, 17, P.G., t. 94, col. 1837 B, ap. Lossky, p. 81.

The tragedy of “losing” the inamissible^{xxiv} image of the human being consists precisely in this discrepancy, in this splitting of the paradoxical union that is essential to our human creature. At a given moment, man, breaking away from his mysterious interiorities, can maintain only the exterior face or “faces,” without having communication with his ontological depths, and thus usurping his own profound and authentic image. In this situation, a human being only “looks like” himself, a human, but it is not one. It is rather an “anthropoid.” It seems to have an image (the outward one), but it decomposed the inward one, so that it can no longer be perceived exteriorly. The “naturalization” of anthropological concepts that was begun even in the scholastic middle ages would inevitable lead to the consumption of this ultimate tragedy of being. It is a natural consequence of losing the apophatic sense in considering man, sense that only Eastern anthropology maintained fully with a strict objectivity.

There is then a destiny of the image of man, an internal life by which another important aspect of its apophatic structure is revealed to us: the divine image of the human being is an antinomic reality because it is a dynamic reality. The substantial cohesion with the Creator, which is communicated to man by his divine icon, is plenitude, or an entire universe of significations, values, and powers. Thus, the notion of “face” refuses an exclusively static, stunned understanding, as a naturalist mode of perceiving the profound realities may encourage us to proceed. In our usual mode of thinking, we almost inevitably encounter the temptation of confusion between “image” and figure or form. However, the divine image must be understood in fact as an icon, as a special mode of relationship of the divine Archetype with his creature. At the level of the divine image in man, we see the establishment of the metaphysic communication and the absolute ontological dependence between the human being and its uncreated, eternal Paradigm. This essential dependence does not allow our profound image to become a static existence,

closed into a limited circuit, as it is the case of external figure or "form." The figure—our individual image—places some natural (psycho-physical) limits on being and thus it is necessarily constituted by a refusal of everything that it does not find within itself and, at the same time, by a centripetal movement, of closing itself on itself. In this way, the outward form ensures a sufficiency and a closed circuit—which is truly its immediate, psychological life—to the existence comprised within its limits. However, man's internal, divine icon should not be understood as simple "figure": it is a living spiritual image (as any icon), living, on the one hand, from the participation and the ontological coherence with its Prototype and, on the other hand, from the perpetual self-overcoming within its own limits, which is also paradoxical. We confuse the proper modes of existence of these two images of man and we believe that the profound image allows itself to be logically defined and delimited as the outward one only by ignoring this cardinal distinction between them (even if, as we said above, there is a living communication between them). The original quality of "image of God" opposes this confusion. If there were just a static, stunned existence, it would be both determinable and exhaustible by static concepts, this contradicting the term of ineffable divine "image."

This is why there is a certain dynamism that is characteristic to our divine image, a dynamism which is of course different from the simple natural development and which emphasizes, in fact, even more clearly the antinomic overcoming of the static and the dynamic. The reality of this fact is substantiated by a revealed notion: in *Genesis*, we are told that, in his eternal counsel, God decided to make man in his "image" and "likeness" (*Genesis* 1:26). The established essence of a human being and his future destiny, in its entire timelessness, are comprised between these two concepts, which are metaphysical limits of our being. The image shows itself and is realized in likeness, and the likeness is established and is constituted by the image. Even more, it antinomically identifies with it in a way. The Holy

Fathers emphasized the paradoxical identity between image and likeness; however, this identity does not dissolve the distinction between them. In the plenitude of its actualization, the image is likeness. In fact, not only in this stage, but rather from its beginning, man's divine image is likeness in potency, as likeness is image in act, as St. Basil the Great says.⁹⁰

The internal dialectic of the image is expressed by passing from "*imago*" to "*similitudo*," by virtue of which the profound image of man—and, along with it, the entire man—lives and is fulfilled in God.

The divine image in our being will never achieve a perfect resemblance with God, conceived as a total conformity with the Creator, after which it would become and image, a static, stunned, and immobile figure. Of course, the infinite abyss of the Archetype opposes this. Thus, as we said above, the notion of "likeness with God" is paradoxical because, properly speaking, no one and nothing will ever be able to be "like" God entirely. The dialectical relation between image and likeness does not lead to a simple identification between them (and, of course, it will neither lead to a separation—*Aufhebung*—in Hegelian sense). On the contrary, it continuously maintains the unity of contraries which expresses the true rapport between these two concepts-limit.

It is here where antinomy intervenes: without a doubt, an image is a supreme similitude realized in certain forms and correct dimensions, which made it be what it is, so an "image" in itself, and not only a simple and "poor" likeness with something external to it. However, a created image can never be sufficient to itself, cannot be constituted as an aseity, as only its Creator can be. It results from

90 *Despre facerea omului (On the Fashioning of Man)*, c. 21, *apud* H. Andrusos: *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe Răsăritene (The Dogma of the Eastern Orthodox Church)*, trans. P. Stăniloae, Sibiu, 1930, p. 156.

here that a certain ontological dependence of its Paradigm (in other words, the essential necessity of a "resemblance") is immanent to the structure of the image. Any created image feels the need to be confronted with another image and that much more with its original image, with its model, with God. In this ontological distancing that also establishes an ontological proximity (for if there were no distance, there would not be the possibility of proximity either, but rather only identity by confusion, which is absurd)—in this inevitable distance, then, resides the metaphysical basis of image and likeness. An image is not born by comparison, but by proximity and living kinship of two more or less distanced realities. Paradoxically, we could even say that the image will be more vivid and more powerful as the two close existences will be more distanced, essentially speaking, and in clearer rapports between them. Since nothing can equate the infinite distance between Creator and his creature the antinomy of man's resemblance with God must be balanced by emphasizing the truth that this absolute metaphysical differentiation allows the presence of an image and of a likeness with God in a creature who in itself is not God and for whom persists then the interdiction to be completely "like" him.

By virtue of these conditions of its existence in time, an image cannot be indifferent to that which it is like. This represents, in fact, the axiological dimension of the image, its value as expression of the living conformity between type and antitype, between Model and icon. There can be deformed, corrupted images that are not in the likeness of the Archetype, in which the ontological analogy with their Archetype is minimal. The image, however, remains always image, even in these extreme stages of its dissimilitude, for it continues to be someone's icon. Even if considered only by itself, this evidence allows us to speak about the unlikeness with the original, thus indirectly affirming the fact that the most unlike image continues to be an image. (One can see here a certain anteriority of the image before likeness: if the image did not maintain an identity

with itself even within the greatest likeness, we could not speak at all about likeness or unlikeness.) A limit of unlikeness is also given, though, from which the image loses its metaphysical efficiency and the icon is no longer an icon of God. If the image of God is erased or, better said, "is lost," if it is falsified or truncated, then a true spiritual death follows because salvation is conceivable only in the presence of this image. When it disappears, disorientation and void are installed within being and there is no help left for the real salvation of the person. We perhaps arrive here at the most important moment for understanding the apophatic significance of the relation image-likeness. The original level of divine image and likeness in man constitutes, in fact, the metaphysical region in which being is created, the supra-temporal moment (for the human being lives and grows in eternity) when its profound limits are established. The notion of "image" of God leads us to the borders of man's existence, where the dams of his beings are drawn, before the primordial nothingness. Man is constituted and exists as man only by God's image, which fixes his specific ontological regime. The human being is circumscribed by God: by his image given to the creature, the Creator confers to him his beginning (which is Himself), but at the same time also his end (still Himself). The creative Logos stands at the beginning of things, but also at their end. The stamp He imprints on man at the moment of his creation makes it so that, in the image and likeness of God, the beginning of being coincides with its end the (which is actually its timelessness, because the dynamic of man's eternal ascension in God is without term).⁹¹ St. Maximus the Confessor has unparalleled

91 This is the view of the *epektasis* expressed by St. Gregory of Nyssa (see *De vita Moysis*, ...), which resolves antinomically the logical opposition between movement and fixation, between the mobility and the immobility of the deified being in eternal deification.

words for describing these supreme stages of being: "Since the origin naturally circumscribes the movement of those that stem from it, it was also rightly called final target, in which, as in a cause, the movement of those in movement finds its end. Thus, searching his final target earnestly, man finds his origin, which is naturally placed in his final target... This is because he could not escape from its borders, which surround him from all sides and circumscribe his movement."⁹² The border of any creature is thus its origin, which is the act of appearing at a calling of its Creator, since limitation is not an accident for creature, but it is coessential to its being; it is its true and supreme ontological law. The beginning of a creature represents the moment of its differentiation from non-existence, from nothingness; beginning with this moment, its limitation will constitute the maximum justification of its natural indestructibility, establishing, as we said, the absolute differentiation and its non-absorption by the divine abyss from above and the sub-creatural abyss of nothingness from below. For man, this metaphysical mechanism of his limitation is very special. He also wears all the obvious signs of the nothingness from which he comes, but this category, which is primordial for all creatures, is overcome and ontologically transmuted in his person, precisely because of the presence of the image and likeness of God. Man's metaphysical barriers are situated in his personal interiority and are not only external, as in the case of other infra-human existences. This is why man can transcend and organize in a creative fashion the chaos encountered outside. This is also why he enjoys, as another god, personal immortality. The inferior limit of a human being is traced by his divine image, from which and with which his human existence begins and ends. Within this limit, man accomplishes himself; extending the limit also implies in-

92 *Fil.*, III. 320.

creasing its content, so man's growing as man, but also his growing in God, his deification. This does not mean and cannot mean a transgression of the limits, for regardless of how high the created being will rise, it will always have God as limit. Or, this absolute limit cannot be passed in any way.⁹³ In an interesting text constructed on a geometrical symbolism, Tauler illustrates this idea saying that "God is himself a true circle whose infinite circumference has no margins and who comprises, as a point in its center, the vast spirit of man who, in his ability to understand things, is larger than the sky and the earth. However, he is still so small in comparison with this incomprehensible immensity of God that one can barely say that he is something."⁹⁴

For man, the living pulsation of his metaphysical limit represents the content of his spiritual dynamic and of the profound dialectic between him and his Creator. Man must first reach the natural edges of his being by the plenary actualization of his natural potencies. However, arrived here, at this end, he finds himself before a new and eternal beginning: another rhythm commits him from now on, in which human nature, intimately permeated by his Creator, will "endure" deification, maintaining, however, the most characteristic of his powers in antinomic fashion, in this "capacity of bearing God" (*capax Dei, pati Deum*).

The center of emergence of the new states of being remains the same profound region where the image and our likeness with God are inscribed. The anagogic im-

93 See also St. Maximus the Confessor: "For it is not possible for one to be with Christ as He is and then to no longer be with Him, if in Him the centuries arrive at their end and in Him everything that is in movement rests" (*Fil.*, III, 331).

94 Tauler: *Institutiones*, in *Choix d'ouvrages mystiques*, ed. J.-A.-C. Buchon, Paris, 1840.

pulse of deifying ascension is received here (this is because the metaphysical propulsion of a human being in the ocean of deification cannot be the result of strictly natural forces, but only of the aspiration of divine love for its creature). The implicit aptitude of being to obtain the unlimited God in his finite limits can be found here. And it is still here, finally, that the ineffable dilatation of the image on the dimensions of likeness unfolds; by this, the divine icon of man is established and laminated in the presence of the divine Archetype. The Blessed Diadochus of Photice says, "in the case of painted portraits, if one adds the most vivid color to an image, one would bring to surface even the likeness of the smile; similarly, for those rich with divine grace, if the light of love is added, the image is raised completely to the beauty of likeness."⁹⁵ As we said above, the organized striving to maintain and expand the image of God in man by the maximum realization of his conformity with the original constitutes the dynamic process of likeness.

The image, so the inner man, is manifested by likeness, just as someone "passionately in love with Beauty who, continually receiving an image of what he desires, aims to be filled with the face of the Archetype."⁹⁶ But since, on the one hand, the object of his love is infinite, and, on the other hand, his love is itself without repletion, the profound image of man will not cease to dilate infinitely during the eternity of his existence, by increasing in likeness in order to receive the One alike. However, let us repeat, it will not break its limits doing so, since they are at the same time the limits of man himself.

Precisely because of this, we must not lose sight that in the dialectic "image-likeness" it is not uttered a simple dynamism, a strict becoming. Here, in these deep zones,

95 Diadochus of Photice: *Capete, Fil. Rom.*, chapter 89, p. 385.

96 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

movement and rest, immobility and mobility are situated antinomically and united precisely in their incompatibility. The pneumatic life of our inner being could unfold only by this overcoming of contraries.

But if things are this way, if in his ontological nucleus the hidden man experiences (it does not matter whether virtually or actually) a paradoxical and ineffable self-transcendence of his limits by being taken by divine love, how could we still speak of a cataphatic, precise, “clear and distinct” knowledge of this mysterious being that we all possess? The inner man is inexhaustible because he is trained in a continuous becoming that excludes the rigid delimitation of positive concepts. The inner man is incognoscible, just like his Archetype, also because, in a certain sense, he exhibits as well an infinite movement between the limits of his own finitude. “The created spirit is like God in that is ‘infinite’ and is unlike God in that is an infinity in movement.”⁹⁷ “Or, that which is not limited escapes the apprehension of the intellect by its nature,” St. Gregory of Nyssa says.⁹⁸ Even if it is bounded ontologically, the profound being does not have its limits fixed and, paradoxically, will never fix them because the true and supreme limit of man is God, who in himself is unlimited.⁹⁹ Thus, the inner human being cannot enter under the determinations of discursive knowledge, which does not mean that it cannot be known, but rather that it requires a knowledge that fits its natural mystery, and that is an apophatic knowledge. The human abyss, just like the

97 *Ibidem*, p. 29, intr.

98 *Ibidem*, p. 144.

99 “When someone, clinging to God from all his soul, advances and arrives at a clearer sight, he knows that the limit of what he sees is in fact unlimitedness.” St. Gregory Palamas, *Al treilea cuvânt din Triada înlăi contra lui Varlaam* (*The Third Word from from First Triad against Barlaam*), translation by P. Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. XXXIII.

divine one, can be probed, penetrated, and understood only on the coordinates of the apophatic view; an “infinite ignorance” is more proper to the comprehension of the inner man than a “clear” and exhaustive comprehension. When you try to introduce the apophatic structure of our being in the categories of the cataphatic intellect, you never succeed to catch something from its essence and its obscure existence. They escape through your fingers, and you remain faced with a simulacrum of knowledge, with an idol,^{xxv} stunned and dead, and not with the mysterious icon of the inner man. His antinomic, ineffable life and structure, his metalogical relationship with God can only be grasped and described in antinomic, paradoxical terms, expressing the chiaroscuro of a living mystery, continually having reference to a depth that transcends even these expressions.

An anthropology that ignores the apophatic structure of man, that does not open its sight toward the innermost structure of being—and this only because it finds this category inaccessible—such an anthropology would be fatally reduced only to the description of the exterior levels (and thus insignificant) of man. It would be even more dangerous to become an abstract conceptual reconstruction, believing that it offers a real understanding when in fact it limits itself to composing and combining. The discovery of the hidden man requires an anthropological “mystagogy,” and not a psychological introversion or a reflexive analysis. It is necessary to have a continuous initiation in order to know and engage the inner roads that lead toward the mystery in us, where our profound being, “raising always above itself and ceasing to be what it was, beholds itself as dressed with the shape and image of God.”¹⁰⁰

One may object to what was said above, saying that the stages and the realities considered until now as limit-

100 Tauler, *op.cit.*, p. 645.

stages would refer to what may be called the strict process of man's deification and so our discussion was not so much about the general and permanent anthropological structure, but rather only about a special, and so limited, aspect of anthropology. In reality, though, it can be easily understood that one and the same inner man is present and manifested in all the moments of his existence: when he is thought and when he is not, when he is only a potential presence and an actual unfolding. Deification is not added to being as a totally external, heterogeneous element that has no adherence to his real structure. In fact, remaining of course the fruit of the action of divine grace, deification represents at the same time the development of a natural aptitude of the human creature. Let us not forget that the true state of man, his primordial ontological regime in which he was constituted by the Creator is precisely the state of "created god." This state is gifted by the image and likeness with God in him. Outside of it, man is no longer man; pure nature is an abstraction. We are then compelled to head precisely toward these deep regions and states of the human being when we want to know his authentic essence. In fact, such an attitude emphasizes even more the theocentrism implied by the real structure of man and explicitly by the anthropological view of Eastern patristic. The term is powerful and largely comprehensive. It points to the fundamental value of our being. Man is created, maintained, and developed only by this convergence toward the Unique Being from where he received the Spirit of his personal life, toward the Image without beginning, where he feels the initial power of the Logos. We cannot conceive man outside of this essential relationship with God and outside the tension toward the ineffable Center of his life and being. There is, then, an ontological theocentrism, co-implicit to the instituted human nature, and there is a dynamic theocentrism, co-extensive to his profound life. An anthropology that would not acknowledge the polarization of the human being toward the Divine Being as a fundamental category would

be condemned to end sooner or later in the postulation of human "naturalism" and then in man's de-centering. We must repeat—this is what happened to post-Augustinian Western anthropology where (in contradistinction to Eastern patristic) the divine image of man, the source of his theocentric orientation, is minimalized, having an emphasis instead on the initial imperfection of the creature, "risen only by a special decree." Humanity's tragic later destiny, passed through Protestantism, a destiny in which humanity was detached from its metaphysical foundations, has its germs in this conception.

In a first attempt of approximation, we then saw that the basis of anthropological apophaticism must be first searched in the mysterious essence specific to man, that of an image and likeness of God. The Holy Fathers found the inner man, the hidden man, or the man unidentifiable discursively in the deep zones where this divine image dwells. Following the path of Pauline theology even from the aurora of patristic thought, Origen wrote that "the inner man is the being in God's image, and not the body or the soul."¹⁰¹ After him, the great Cappadocians emphasized the significance of the profound nucleus of being and formulated clearly the necessity of the apophatic attitude for understanding man.¹⁰² Focused on contemplation, the spirituality of the desert lives plenary and powerfully the reality of the mysterious man of the heart, and this is why the writings of the Fathers of the desert

101 *Contra Celsum*, apud Aloisius Lieske: *Die Theologie der Logos-mystik bei Origenes*, Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Münster in Westfalen, 1938, p. 103.

102 See *supra*, St. Basil; also Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata dogmatica* and *Poemata moralia*.

abound in references about the mysterious life of the divine image in us.¹⁰³

Later, St. Maximus the Confessor enriches patristic thought with an anthropological synthesis of a still insufficiently known greatness, in which image and likeness constitute the cardinal themes of understanding being.¹⁰⁴ Finally, in later centuries, with the spirituality of Sinai and Hesychasm, this entire great pneumatic tradition is fixed, goes deeper, and is affirmed as the true spiritual axis of Christian life. Especially for the Orthodox East, the plenary fulfillment of the inner man, in the image and likeness of God, constitutes the supreme aspiration that has nourished over centuries a powerful, if not ineffable, spiritual life.

If the equivalence between the inner man and God's image in us explains the apophatic incognoscibility of the inner being (co-implicit with the incognoscibility of the divine icon), in order to be even closer to understanding the apophatic structure of man we will have to remember that the authentic apophatic view never stops at the first moment, at the discovery of a mystery that is impenetrable for discursive knowledge. If we proceed this way, if we limit us to this, then we would enunciate a virtual agnosticism, which will not delay to effectively appear after some time. If apophatic theology does not fall into agnosticism but rather becomes a true mode of real and abundant

103 See Evagrius Ponticus and, in general, the Fathers of the *Philokalia*, and also *The Spiritual Homilies* of Macarius of Egypt. Diadochus of Photice affirms clearly that the entire problem of the development of the grace received in baptism returns to the problem of restoring the image and growing within likeness: *Cuv. Ascetic*, chapter 89, *Fil. Rom.*, I.

104 See *Filocalia rom. (Romanian Philokalia)*, vol. II and III, *passim*, and also H. Urs v. Balthasar, *op. cit.*, especially the chapter "*Die anthropologische Synthese.*"

knowledge, then apophatic anthropology, at its turn, is not limited to only recognizing an ineffable and conceptually incomprehensible center within the human being, but it finds within itself the coordinates of an apophatic gnosis by which the mysterious depth of man is brought closer to profound understanding.

Let us remember that apophaticism has a moment—the most important and the most characteristic—when negation coexists paradoxically with affirmation, when the spirit is installed within a real knowledge without leaving, at the same time, an inevitable ignorance of the given situation. Apophatic antinomy, which is the expression of this stage, is completely different than negative theology. Of course, in a first approach, apophatic anthropology must begin also with pointing out the incognoscibility of the essence that is situated in the realm of the profound limits of being, where the image of God in man is hidden. An essence, however, even if incognoscible, is not a dead quantity that would be stunned and refractory to any approach (the only case in which negation would remain the only mode of expression). Au contraire, being the spring of any existential affirmation and the true *entelechia* of being, the apophatic essence of a human creature pulsates vividly and is manifested as an ontological *continuum* in man's life, thus overcoming a pure negative (and negativist) incognoscibility. It is true that the inner being is a mystery, but an eloquent mystery, and not one depleted of meaning. If man's apophatic structure refuses the limitative determinations of logical knowledge, there still is another mode of comprehending it, beyond simple ignorance and too perfect knowledge. This mode is characteristic to the deepest levels of being: it is the mode of presence. The category of "presence" introduces a new dimension in anthropology, perhaps the innermost one, by which the notion of "divine image of man" receives a new and rich understanding. After all, the divine image from our being is a presence, even a double presence: it is significant in rapport with divine nature but also with human nature, which it de-

finis. The relationship established between man and God at the level of the image—relationship that establishes the ultimate mystery of a human being—consists in the fact that the image is the expression and the support of that which it contains, just as man's body or the entire man is the image of the soul, as the Son of God or the Holy Spirit is the image of the Father's essence contained in Him. Being an organ of the "substantial" participation to the life of Divinity, man's divine icon must be understood as a living image, and not in an external sense, as when a thing is "the image" of another. Between image and Archetype there is a reciprocal belonging and cohesion by which the creature is consecrated to God *ab origine*, admitted to the real communion of its being ("*divinae naturae consortes*," 1 Peter 1). Without a doubt—there is no need to repeat it—a physical coalescence of substances, as in the material union, cannot take place in the spiritual communion with God, but the two principles, the natural and the supernatural, are "mixed" together and constitute an organic whole, a nature of a superior order, like the body and the soul, like the plan and its scion.

This is the way in which (especially for the orthodox patristic) the initial state and destination of man have been understood. On this basis, man was supposed to reach the *apex* of his fulfillment, the final deification, in which his beginning and his end would coincide. This is why the Eastern Holy Fathers emphasize not only the reality of the inherence of the deiform principle in man, but also his divine substantiality, which is an expression of the uncreated grace conferred to the being from the beginning. In a close argumentation, St. Cyril of Alexandria shows that, if there was only a grace imprinted in us, and not the substantial Holy Spirit, we should have not called us "image of God," but rather "image of grace."¹⁰⁵ However, by the

105 *De Trinitate*, VIII, *ap.* Scheeben, p. 643.

real inhabitation of the Holy Spirit, divine substance fills the creature, substantiates the co-possession between man and God, and constitutes the essential element of our divine filiation. Due to this co-possession of his substance, God naturally grants to the creature his parental love and the right to enjoy together with Him his glory and eternal happiness. The seal of his image, imprinted on our being, shows that it belongs to him and He, on his turn, belongs to it. The ultimate word that can be uttered for understanding the divine image of the creature is, thus, "presence": a presence is the innermost and the deepest thing present in the soul. While He is close within presence, God remains ineffable and unknowable to the being. At the same time, He also communicates himself in real fashion, beyond intelligence, in a definite, vivid, and personal mode. The antinomy of the incomprehensibility of the image is resolved in presence. A presence is "something," a "configuration" (better said a structure), but not a limited figure; however, it allows itself to be understood only in a real contact, by an *impression* which can be given only by it as "presence," and not by its conceptual substitutes. (This is what St. Gregory of Nyssa names "the feeling of presence," opposed and superior to discursive intelligence.¹⁰⁶) For the profound man, for the inner man, the relationship with God unfolds on the dimensions of presence. In presence, he is in direct communication only with God. Here, he can participate to His life by nature and by grace, grasp Him as infinite (beyond the positive limits of form, space, and time), and so strive for Him beyond any created thing and, in this sense, raise above all created objects and notions and even above himself, God being for him more present than his own presence.

This is why, complementary with this first theonomic significance, the category of presence fulfills an essentially

106 *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

anthropological function: it is constituted as a dynamic center of irradiations of the sanctifying powers. Of course, God is present in us, in our intimacy as in the intimacy of all existences. First, He is present by His immensity and infinity, in virtue of which all things last, live, and move in Him. Here, however, we deal with a completely different presence, which is specific only to man and proper only to his destiny of created god.

In this man, God is present in immanent and substantial fashion, training the creature in a new and sublime existence, transfiguring it inwardly and “assimilating” it so much to Himself that the Creator becomes—actually, and not only virtually—all in all. The structure and the supernatural essence of this life requires that this life would be hidden and mysterious by excellence, inaccessible to the external eyes and understandings, having its seed in the mysterious center of being. We must repeat that we enter here in the trans-intelligible (and not unintelligible) order of the apophatic.

Before going further, it is necessary to establish here a distinction among the various moments of divine presence in man and its meanings. As we have seen, this presence starts with the beginning of the human being, when the Spirit which is instilled to the new creature is constituted as an ontological value which is specifically human. On this level, the divine presence is co-implicit to man’s divine image and is a universal and permanent given of any human creature. Divinity resides, in a certain mode, in every man, at the same time with his image of man; this constitutes a reality that cannot be lost because man cannot lose his image completely, for this would mean to lose his essence of man, to annihilate himself metaphysically, which is contradictory. But the divine icon of being did not remain in its Edenic state of purification and primordial luminosity: the catastrophe of the original sin darkened, diminished, and falsified it in Adam and, by him, in all of his descendants. Although man did not lose his image, his ontological core, completely, this image is still altered to

the point of disfiguration. In a certain sense (only metaphorically), it could have been said that humanity lived in an aniconic age between the first and second Adam, deprived of the presence of the profound image and so of the internal presence of God.¹⁰⁷ The truncation of the divine image from our being was so effective that its restoration—which could not be accomplished by the efforts of corrupted nature—was the fruit of a new creation, performed by the true Proto-father of humankind, the New Adam Jesus Christ. In him, our corrupted nature rediscovered its first Edenic image, recovered its previously lost permeability toward Divinity, and was reborn to a life that is superior to the one lived by the first Adam before his fall. In the Savior's action, the Christological man is already deified potentially and can reach, even in this life, the state of the future age, in perfect sainthood.

Of course, with these considerations, all the perspectives and implications of the theology of incarnation and redemption are open, but this goes beyond the limits and the intentions of the present research. We also encounter here data that is integrated in the problematic of anthropological apophaticism—and it imposes retention and emphasis. We must first accentuate that, in the view of Orthodox patristic, Incarnation is articulated directly with the profound structure of man—with his inner image and destiny. By Incarnation, the economy of Providence intended the salvation and the refashioning of the mysterious icon of being; this truth and also the metaphysical possibility of this act are grounded on the existence and the perenniality of man's divine image. Without him, the Incarnation could have not been done. According to the

107 We can find this in the different modes in which grace acts in the Old and the New Testament: external in the first (The Spirit had not been renewed within, *Ps.* 50) and internal in the second (because grace has come in the world in Christ, *John* 1).

great Didascalia of the Church, the mission of the incarnated Word, unfolded according to the mysterious plan coming from a hidden age, consists in the “salvation of God’s image in the fallen man.”¹⁰⁸ In order to accomplish this salvation, the Word which was made a body descends to the most humbled conditions of our humanity—until death on the cross—so that He could give to all the participation to His image, or the most perfect image of God that a human creature can ever have in him. Even prior to this polarization of the direction of Incarnation toward the profound image of being, God finds established in this (still by Him, without a doubt) the ontological framework of the possibility of his coming in human body. In a text that we will cite in its entirety, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem sheds an admirable light on this perspective: “*Is, qui hominem ab initio plasmavit ipsumque ad propriam suam imaginem condidit, non alia ratione hominem salvandum propriamque imaginem rudimentum esse judicat quam si ipse natura fiat homo, propriamque imaginem proprium suum efficiat indumentum.*”¹⁰⁹ In the human being’s indestructible interior aptitude to receive God—an attitude that is grounded on his divine image that became, at a given moment, clothing for the incarnated Verb—one can find justifications for the concept of “eternal theantropy,”¹¹⁰ or better said of profound metaphysical congruence between man and

108 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.*, VII; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Lib. De img. Dei*, ap. Maréchal, *op. cit.*, II, p. 132.

109 *Or. II in SS. Deiparae Annunt.*, ap. P. Staniloae: *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului*, p. 122. See also St. Irineus of Lyon: “*Quando caro Verbum Dei factum est... et imaginem (in homine) ostendit veram, ipse hoc fiens, quod erat imago eius, et similitudinem firmans restituit, consimilem paciens hominem invincibili Patri per visibile Verbum,*” *De haer. Lib. V*, 16, ap. Scheeben, *op. cit.*, III, p. 470.

110 The concept is very dear to Bulgakov’s theology: see *Du Verbe incarné*, Paris, Aubier, 1943, and *Le Paraclet*, Paris, Aubier, 1946.

God. However, and more important, one discovers here the deepest significance of God's Incarnation, destined to establish—independently and beyond the original sin—the true deifying relationship from Image to image between Maker and His creature.

The second significance of the Incarnation that must be mentioned here reveals a complementary (and to an extent internal) aspect of the one above: if the Savior's coming in the body returned to man his true image, this action is ontologically solidary with a new and eminent presence of Divinity in our being. By the grace given to creature (grace that is subsequent to the abolition of the original sin), the two presences meet and unite in depth. The first presence is the one from the moment of creation, "*ad imaginem Dei*" and altered by the fall; the second is the one of divine adoption in Jesus Christ, fruit of His *kenosis*. The gracious state returns to the image (the receptacle of Divinity) the inner presence and thus opens to being the perspective of immersion in the ocean of uncreated and deifying energies. It is true that the new presence of the properly speaking deifying grace is no longer a natural element presupposed in any human being. Historically speaking, at the level of this age,^{xxvi} only the Christianity that forms the mystical body of Christ is the owner and the beneficiary of grace. However, by the Lord's assumption of humanity, the entire creation enters into a Christological eon and the human creature is Christified in potency. This means that the life-giving participation of Divinity is open to all, without restrictions or impediments. In fact, this is what needs to be retained here. The incarnation and the deification correspond to each other and entail each other reciprocally.¹¹¹ The supernatural breadth of this event determines that the Holy Trinity

111 See St. Maximus the Confessor, *Answer to Thalassie*, question 22, *Fil. Rom.*, III, p. 69.

manifests in it really and effectively. The economy of the Son and the economy of the Holy Spirit are especially correlated here. The mystical co-naturality between man and God, established by the image given to our proto-parent and reestablished in the incarnated Son, is sealed perfectly in the Spirit which descended on the creature. At the level of this act and on the coordinates of the new ontological regime that resulted for the creature deified by grace, anthropological apophaticism receives a new frame and a new substantiation from its meeting with the apophaticism that is characteristic to the two Persons of the Trinity, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. This means that the interior Mystery of the human being is specified and illuminated in its relationship with the mystery of the Incarnation and that of deification. We will consider them here, as much as possible, only in their apophatic implications.

The incarnation unveils the essential mystery of the profound conformity between man and God in the person of the God-Man Jesus Christ. The Savior's taking on human flesh means the realization of an organic ontological correlation of the divine with the human in the person of the God-Man Jesus Christ. The union of the Logos with human nature becomes the exemplary cause of any union between man and God. Even if Christ is empirically one of the members of the historical humanity, metaphysically speaking the entire humanity, without exceptions and without differences in time, is recapitulated and resumed in His being. The nature of the Savior represents the metaphysical integral of the entire human nature in its plenitude. Thus, the life of those who participate to this nature is, from now on, "hidden with Christ in God" (*Col.*, 3:3). In this very precise place of the profound union between the human and the divine in the hypostasis of the incarnated Logos, the event (better said, the category) of the Incarnation unveils its apophatic structure. One cannot find positive, clear, and distinct expressions or concepts that would comprise within them the mystery of the union between the two incommensurable natures, the human

and the divine. The characteristic approaches of cataphatic thinking, those of the logical-exhaustive "comprehension" of mystery, are not of course excluded. However, their failure inevitably takes on the language of heresy.

In considering the mystery of the theandric union, the dogmatic disputes from the Church's past registered the two extreme and equally invalid positions: the Nestorian one, which decomposes the mystery, reducing it to a moral communion of persons, and the Apollinairean one, which brings violence upon it by not accepting the integrity of the human nature in the person of the Savior.¹¹² In both positions, the authentic and essential reality of the fact remains ignored precisely because it consists in a mystery that refuses the precise determinations of cataphatic knowledge. Does it then mean that the assimilation of human nature in the incarnated Logos remains for us an opaque and impenetrable given? Is it some kind of obscure and incomprehensible residuum, an *asylum ignorantiae* in the mind of the Light that came in the world to illuminate every man? Certainly not! Only the ignorance of the meaning of the apophatic attitude can lead to this third error, an agnostic one, different from the two previous attitudes which were gnostic. We must not forget (and we will repeat this even with the risk of satiety) that apophaticism comprises an antinomic modality of knowledge due to which mystery becomes, paradoxically, close and intelligible, without being thus diminished in its own essence of mystery. Naturally integrated to Christian pneumatic thinking, this apophatic mode found its most powerful and most significant expression in the dogmatic formula of the union of natures in the person of the Savior Christ, established at the Fourth Ecumenical Council

112 See P. Stăniloae, "Definiția dogmatică de la Calcedon" ("The Dogmatic Definition from Chalcedon"). *Ortodoxia*, year III, no. 2–3, August–September 1951, Bucharest, p. 302.

in Chalcedon. The content of the Chalcedon dogma has a universally overwhelming anthropological importance, and not only strictly Christological. If we only retained the concept of “hypostasis” that was inaugurated by it and destined to an exceptional philosophical career, it would be sufficient to recognize the cardinal function of the text that was established fifteen centuries ago. It says, “we confess... one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead and perfect in humanity; truly God and truly man, the Son of God, One born, acknowledged in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference between the natures is in no way removed because of the union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature is preserved, and both combine in one person and in one *hypostasis*, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.” As it can be seen, the Chalcedon dogma is literally impregnated with apophaticism. Thus, its structure acquires a typical value for grasping the apophatic “mechanism” of appropriating the living mystery from the Lord’s Incarnation. Analyzing the dogmatic lineaments of the formula, we can easily realize that its center of gravity is constituted by the theandric union in the Savior’s person. It is obvious that, if the cataphatic determinations can provide only some pseudo-understandings that belong to an Apollinairian or Nestorian category, then we are before a mystery. How can a unique, monohypostatic life be realized and unfold in two natures which are so different that, as we said above, they are incommensurable? Without a doubt, this union and unity within the being of the Savior remains an unknowable mystery. Anytime he speaks of the “appropriation of the human body and acts by God the Word,” St. Cyril declares it as “*ineffable, beyond the mind*,”¹¹³ “an un-

113 P. Stăniloae, *op.cit.*, p. 303.

uttered and mysterious unity by which the Word became mysteriously and incomprehensibly man and Son of man.”¹¹⁴ The typical expressions of apophaticism appear spontaneously, being the only ones able to offer a comprehension of mystery. The supreme theophany, God's perfect manifestation in the world by the incarnation of the Word fully maintains its apophatic character. “Jesus' mystery was a hidden mystery: there is no word, nor mind, that would comprise it; on the contrary, it is inexpressible as long as you speak, and unknown as long as you understand it with the mind... In his humanity, Christ the Supra-essential One was manifested in a human being without ceasing to be hidden beneath this manifestation or, to express myself in a more divine fashion, in this manifestation itself.”¹¹⁵ “All the affirmations that have as object the Holy humanity of Jesus Christ have the excellence and the value of the most formal negations.”¹¹⁶ The basis of a theandric union is found in the unity of the two natures in one person, but its mechanism, the “how” that is so dear to any discursive knowledge, from which it begins and to which it ends, remains inaccessible to conceptual determinations and incomprehensible for cataphatic categories.

In this zone of mystery, a certain intelligibility is accomplished only on the coordinates of the apophatic, and this is why the Chalcedonian formula is expressed in the striking terms of antinomic apophaticism. The theandric union is framed among four terms, not only simply negative, but also antinomic: unmixed, unchanged; undivided, inseparable. These definitions correspond fully to their purpose: not a simple “negative theology,” not a silence

114 *Ibidem* p. 316, *the author's underline*.

115 Dionysius the Areopagite. *Epistle III*, trans. Cit., p. 501; see also Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

116 *Ibidem*, *Epistle IV*, p. 502.

filled with meanings and presences, but only an apophatic antinomy in which the incompatible terms coexist and implicate mutually can grasp the profound and ineffable equilibrium of the person of the God-Man Jesus Christ, preventing the diversions on one side or the other and mentioning the incomprehensible distinction-unity without mixture, without change, without division or separation. Where cataphatic knowledge is only able to confuse, to flatten, and, after all, to profane without understanding the being of the most living mysteries of the world, apophaticism finds the possibility to embrace the trajectory of mystery, appropriating it in its natural interiority and, due to the valences of antinomy, discovers also the most adequate expression for communicating it without committing sacrilege.

Without a doubt, the Chalcedon fundamental dogma remains a logical, even ontological paradox for the sensibility of clear and distinct knowledge. However, its remarkable metaphysical force consists in this. It is thus integrated within the category of the most important apophatic dogmas of Christian revelation; by the structural similitude with the view of uncreated energies, human mystery is articulated on the level of this dogma with the mystery of divine abyss. Indeed, let us remember how the Church portrays the supernatural mystery of the Holy Trinity, as the mystery of uncreated energies. "God is one in himself," St. Gregory Palamas says; "at the same time, the three divine Hypostases are fully, essentially, and substantially detained and contained (intertwined—*perihorouíson*) one in the other, *without mixture or division* (my underline), and so their energy is common."¹¹⁷ The energies are both "distinct and undivided" from essence, and this one is concomitantly incommunicable in itself and

117 *Capita, ap. Krivoshein, op. cit.*, p. 140.

still communicable through them.¹¹⁸ In the case of the “theological” mystery of the Trinity, we encounter the same antinomic expressions as in the Chalcedonian Christological dogma. Of course, it cannot be a simple formal analogy only, but also the manifestation of one and the same attitude of trans-conceptual, pneumatic comprehension of the mystery. It is an attitude that functions identically when faced with the mystery from above and the one from below. It is expressed similarly, according to the modes of antinomic apophaticism, emphasizing the unity and without annulling the distinctions (unmixed and undivided). In a very strict and ontologically precise sense, “Christianity is an imitation of the nature of God,” according to the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa.¹¹⁹ The main revelation of the apophatic definition from Chalcedon rests perhaps on this view.

Thus, the apophatic view of the mystery of incarnation resumes and focalizes in it the fundamental meanings of apophatic anthropology. The Christological category became the fundamental anthropological category of the human being: we know that the Savior Jesus assumed not an individual human nature, but the entire humanity, the human nature in its plenitude. Jesus Christ is the unique mediator between man and God. He is so not in a juridical sense, but rather ontological, in the virtue of the hypostatic union of the two natures. The value and the anthropological significance of this fact have an absolute character. It follows that the God-Man Christ constitutes the place of insertion in Divinity of every human existence; that, virtually, any man is already a brother of Christ as a participant to the human nature that He assumed totally; that, finally, every man is called to unify his own nature with the divine nature by grace, in his created hypostasis, according to the

118 See *supra* p. 70 sq. and pp. 89-90.

119 *De professione christiana*, *ap.* Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

archetype of the uncreated divine Logos, the hypostasis of the two natures ineffably united by kenotic incarnation. The Christological theandric is the paradigm of any created person's theandric. In the union with God by grace, a human being expresses his own mystery, his apophatic antinomy, similar to the one recorded at Chalcedon in the person of the Savior. The uncreated grace and the created nature meet and weld intimately in the depths of the deified being; it does not mean that a transubstantiation of the human nature results from this (even if it becomes the object of an ontological transmutation). The rapport between essences remains the same, unmixed, unchanged, undivided, and inseparable. The Holy Fathers (especially St. Maximus the Confessor) expanded these two apophatic correlations to the general rapport between God and the world, creation that implies very important consequences, as we will see further. We will point here to another anthropological consequence of this idea, which is maintained within the case of the specific relation between man and Creator, considered within the framework of the definition from Chalcedon. The Chalcedon formula unfolds around the four negations, as we saw above; however, within its discrete center, it also has the affirmation that wraps and actually delimitates the paradox. The antinomies of the diphysical rapport presuppose the affirmative reality of the possibility of the theandric union as a metaphysical anteriority. Within this dogma, an entire universe of profound anthropological significations is hidden, all of them being established on the cardinal one, the co-naturalness between man and God. The divine Logos can be incarnate only because there are an affinity and an ontological congruence between Him and His creature, established, as we saw, on the divine image and similitude of our being. The mystery of the real and deep communication of man with God, manifested for the first time on the moment of creation, when God placed an indestructible seal on our being and thus rendering the deification of creature possible, finds its crowning in the superessential

perspective of the person of Jesus Christ, God and man in eternity.

Thus, St. Maximus would say that Christ the Savior is the end of all things.¹²⁰ But in this way, the theandric union naturally directs our attention to the other term of the relation, to the human nature, in which it indicates its own depth, commensurable to the divine one. If before God had become subject of human operations in incarnation, if man, at his turn, becomes subject of divine operation by grace, it means that we have in this mysterious exchange of natures an exceptional aptitude of our being to be constituted as another subject of the Divinity. We are then entitled to explore the apophatic region within the profound structure of the human creature, where the most precious vocation of his theonomic existence is present, the one of real participation to the Uncreated Being.

The incarnation of the Lord brings forward the interiority of the being which was previously forbidden and, in its light, the lines of anthropological apophaticism obtain, as we said at the beginning, a special frame. God finds in the human creature an ineffable zone of depth, incomprehensible logically, but graspable antinomically, which realizes and maintains the real unity with the Uncreated Being of Divinity, but ensures the effective autonomy of the human nature. Only this hidden inner man can comprise ineffably the One who's image and likeness is the Logos. Incarnation allows us and, at the same time, compels us to pay attention to the ontological value of our apophatic interiority.

This truth becomes even more evident within the economy of the Holy Spirit, which is called and implied by the economy of the Incarnation. The general theme of the being's deification can be treated from a Christological perspective, and also from a pneumatic perspective. They

120 *Qu. ad. Th.*, 22, *Fil.*, III, p. 69.

are two solidary moments that can be distinguished but not totally separated. The action of the Son relates to our nature, which it constitutes ontologically, cleansing it of the filthiness of the original sin and re-opening for it the way toward the interiority of Divinity. However, being must unite with its Creator personally, to communicate with Him at the level of its created hypostasis. This is why the uncreated grace of divine adoption is given to each human person. In virtue of our previous distinction, we could say that the economy of the Son accomplishes the restoration of man's divine image, returning to him his initial capacity of receptivity for the divine. The economy of the Spirit consecrates this ontological restructuring by conferring His own presence, as supreme internal guarantee of the image of the resemblance between the created icon and the uncreated one. The Savior Christ is the eternal archetype of our theandric humanity. The Holy Spirit is the mysterious presence from our depths that seals the Christological image by the accomplishment of the similitude. Again, we speak here of a real modal distinction, but not a complete separation. We have seen that "divine image" and "divine presence" are co-implicit realities. Presence expresses the ontological essence of the image, and the image depicts the living and personal mode of presence. Thus, the work of the Savior and the work of the Holy Spirit are inseparable. The Savior reconstitutes the unity of nature by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is communicated to human persons by the Savior Christ.¹²¹

121 Although not directly connected with our problem, we believe it is still opportune to add here a few notes about the relation between Christology and pneumatology. Eastern Christianity has always manifested itself as being eminently Christocentric, of a pneumatophoric Christocentrism which associates intimately and inseparably the Person of the incarnate Logos with the one of the Holy Spirit. If the Savior Christ is the foundation of our salvation, the

Of course, this is not the place to treat the vast dogmatic theme of pneumatology. We are interested to detach, as much as possible, the apophatic meanings of the action of the Spirit and its anthropological contingencies. Parallel to the theandric mystery of the person of the incarnate Logos in the human being, there is also a mystery of the presence of the Spirit non-manifested in itself. As there is a Christological apophaticism, there is also a pneumatological apophaticism. In the apophatic relation

Holy Spirit is his communication, without whom we cannot know him; if the Son is the icon of the Father, the Spirit, on its turn, is the icon of the Son. Thus, the just understanding of the person of the Savior cannot be realized outside of the Holy Spirit. A non-pneumatic Christocentrism is threatened to be limited only to the external, human aspects of the incarnate Logos and to ignore His depths (the Savior himself emphasizes before His apostles a greater fullness of His work and presence after the coming of the Comforter).

Another note refers to the hierarchal *Rev.* of the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. The Son reveals to the world the hidden Face of the Father; the Holy Spirit, the theandric Face of the Son; the Son, the closest hypostasis to creature, no longer shows Himself in the icon of another hypostasis.

However, there is also a revealed image of the Holy Spirit: this is the human hypostasis (or the pluri-hypostasis), the multitude of the Saints. Any saint is an "icon" (even in strict sense) of the Trinity, by the immediate work of the Spirit, which they communicate to the entire creation as from a source of sanctifying irradiations. In the deified man, we distinguish at the same time, in a significant and shattering combination, the true image of man (the saint) and the mysterious image of Divinity: the Holy Spirit reveals God's hidden icon as well as man's hidden icon. He is the closest icon of the Holy Trinity, but he also is ineffable and the very icon of deified humanity. The human being finds totally and plenary his image only within the Holy Spirit, the image of the entire Divinity.

of the two Triadic Persons with the depths of human being, the anthropological apophaticism obtains not only its major justification, but also its self-conscience. The anthropological mystery of our co-naturality with the Creator is implied in the divine-human person of the Savior. In the hypostatic presence of the Spirit, "one glimpses the mystery of the soul that receives its Master and becomes the throne of His Glory," according to St. Macarius the Egyptian.¹²² Even more—and we must say this from the beginning—the apophatic attitude in its entirety seems to be determined by the specific way of manifestation and presence of the Holy Spirit, the mysterious person of the Holy Trinity. The image of the Holy Spirit remains covered in mystery, undiscovered in itself; being a true secret Hypostasis of the triune Divinity, it remains unknown to all, even if all are fulfilled by it. In a paradoxical way, the incognoscibility of the Spirit coincides with its intimate insertion in the depths of our being or, speaking according to the Areopagitic mode, it remains hidden by this very insertion. Without a doubt, the entire Holy Trinity, one and undivided, comes to dwell in the mysterious tabernacle of our soul; but it is the Holy Spirit who has the special ministry of deifying the creature by its substantial inhabitation.¹²³ The human being adheres to the life of the Logos only due to the Spirit who transmits it to us. The most mysterious Face of the Holy Trinity is also the closest to us, the first that meets us on our path of return to *the*

122 *Op.cit.*, *Omilia I*, p. I.

123 Of course, the mysterious action of the Spirit within the interiority of our being is operated by uncreated energies, undivided from the common essence of the Trinity, but which It administers in particular fashion. This other aspect of the problem does not interest us here (we partially mentioned it before) because the expressions would remain the same within the theme that we treat here.

homeland and that never operates from far away. These findings may not allow us to circumscribe the mystery of the anthropological-pneumatic relation: it is about the mystery of the presence by excellence.

While remaining incommunicable, the Spirit identifies nevertheless with the human person to such an extent that, through Him,^{xxvii} Divinity itself in-forms the creature from its inside, imprinting Itself to it hypostatically, as seal and substantial unction. The intimate ontological association from which the new spiritual race of the sons of God results is operated through Him. They are gifted with the likeness of the Father and assimilated to the Son, the One like His Father by nature. In our depths, the Holy Spirit substitutes us, in a sense (for He calls within our hears, "Abba, Father"). In an ineffable kenosis, He consents to hide as Person before the created persons in order to communicate to them His divinity, in the brilliance of a fulgurating immanence. Such a total presence becomes a more ample reality than the simple habitation or than the simple confrontation; it implies an intimate co-possession of essences, we would even say an amalgamation or, even better said, a homogenization. The presence of the Spirit in the most intimate depth of a being imprints in this one the excellence of the divine nature, so that it would become homogenous to it.¹²⁴ The antinomy of creatureness is resolved here, in this sanctuary of the soul under the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Man and God, creature and Creator communicate plenary, resulting a new ontological category by a true interior transfiguration: the deified

124 "The closeness and the kinship of the soul, in this depth, with God are so ineffably great," Tauler says, "that you do not dare and you even cannot speak too much of this." "This depth is so noble that you cannot even give it a proper name. *It is impossible to give it a name, as it is impossible to give a name to God*" (s.n.), ap. F. Vernet, *La spiritualité médiévale*, Bloud et Gay, 1929, pp. 191–192.

man of the created god. After the hypostatic union of the natures in the person of the incarnated Logos, the mysterious path of our salvation places us before the hypostatic union of the Holy Spirit with the created person of the deified creature. This expression does not want to mean, of course, the appearance of a monohypostatic being, but only to emphasize the reality of the organic solidarity between the two hypostases, the uncreated one of the Spirit and the created one of man, both impropriating themselves reciprocally by their dedication to a previously existent person (which is different than the being of the Savior, that is initially monohypostatic).

We meet here again the apophaticism that is characteristic to the situations-limit: we can express the powerful reality of the fusion (and not of the con-fusion) of the Holy Spirit with our interiority only antinomically. It is not the nature, but rather the human subject, the hypostasis of being, which becomes by grace subject of divine nature and operations. Man and God compose in unchanged and unmixed fashion, inseparable and undivided, the new leaven of the plenary spiritual creature. Perhaps even more than in the case of the theandric person of the Savior, the union of the created being with the mysterious Hypostasis of the Spirit requires an apophatic attitude for being understood. In the absence of this attitude, the mode of the operation of the Holy Spirit in us is conceived under the species of an "efficient and exemplary principle of charity... by which God, communicating created grace to the creature, produces in it... a perfection that is durable and imitated after His own"¹²⁵; this is a pale and vague view in comparison with the passionate depths of Eastern apophatic understanding. In order to illustrate this, we think we must mention in parenthesis (the problem is only

125 This is the scholastic vision, see Scheeben, *op. cit.*, II, p. 619 and 641.

secondarily implicated by the one that we discuss) a subsequent aspect of the general rapport Holy Spirit – human being, and that is the problem of the relation between freedom and grace. This difficult question finds its antinomic solution only on the coordinates of apophatic knowledge. Grace and freedom are two realities but still only one in the ineffable depths of a being in God, in its profound center that determines the person. This is the ultimate meaning of the ineffable substitution that the Holy Spirit has operated within us.

The absence of apophatic thinking leads by necessity to the dissection from the outside of the paradoxical unity grace-freedom in an incredible multitude of determined, adjuvant, prevenient, concomitant, sufficient, efficacious, etc. graces in which Western theology excels, to the despair of any honest desire to understand the problem. The absence of an apophatic attitude also explains the dramatic ethical-theological constructions of the predestinational theories (and this has even more serious consequences), which are gloomy visions that darken the sky of western man, beginning with Blessed Augustine and ending with Calvin. If considered outside of apophaticism, the final problems become pseudo-problems, and they are more inextricable as people pursue more stubbornly their solution.

The apophatic experience of presence melts all contrasts and removes the contradictions that we encounter if we remain at the surface. Paradoxically, it is precisely these contradictions that are signs of confusion: in depth, the ineffable unity of being is remade in its homogenization with its Creator, which means a more eminent own affirmation and not another confusion of its essential identity. We necessarily imply from here the inherently incommunicable structure of knowledge by presence. The categories of language—and of expression in general—are characteristics of the regime of separation. Body, space, and the exterior separate existences so much that the only way they can communicate between them is by sound or

the suggestion of a symbol. Presence, however, is the place of transparency and perichoresis. Distances are suppressed, communication is replaced by communion, and the said word by silence.¹²⁶ Apophaticism is the natural style of ineffable living in such a personal, intimate, unifying presence of the Spirit, as cataphatism is the specific stage of analogical, distanced apprehension of a reality that is unknown in itself and is perceived only in its inferior substitutes. It is difficult to have a representation of the interior transfiguration that changes by grace a temporal-finite conscience into an eternal-infinite one.¹²⁷ Perhaps the most difficult thing is, however, to communicate exteriorly this state. The consciousness of the ineffable presence of the Spirit constitutes the supreme explanation of the apophatic attitude. It is only that apophatic antinomy that can comprise and convey the paradoxically conscientious wonder (and so not the ecstasy) that takes hold of the soul arrived on the peaks of mystery. The orthodox spirituality can bring forward for this the exceptional figure of a “pneumatic” Byzantine who succeeded in rendering the inexpressible content of his experience with the Spirit in unique forms: “When (the Holy Spirit) illumines, as I said, the house of your soul and cleanses it, then He mixes with it without mixing and is united in unspoken fashion and existentially... and how, I cannot say, the two become

126 According to St. Isaac of Syria, “silence is a mystery from the world to come, and the words are of this world” (*Word about silence*). Apophatic knowledge by presence already establishes, thus, the real and concrete conditions of the age to come in the interiority of the chosen ones.

127 The expression must be understood antinomically, and not literally. St. Macarius the Egyptian speaks about a “transmutation of the soul into the divine nature” (*Homily XLIV*, 8, *op. cit.*, p. 218.) St. Maximus and St. Gregory Palamas writes about the “transformation of those who are deified in gods according to grace, without beginning and without end” (P. Stăniloae *op. cit.*, p. LXXIX).

one... Have you known depths of mysteries? The smallest thing of those seen, man... has within him God fully... And joined, how can I tell you who joined me and with whom I joined?... For I also become God by the unspoken union."¹²⁸

Such a powerful integration of a creature in the mystery of the presence of the Spirit allows us to understand closely how apophaticism is, after all, a witness for the work of the Holy Spirit. By the ineffable experience before the Spirit, the human being is not limited to knowing Him only, but he also accomplishes the first and true knowledge of himself. In the uncreated light that illumines his interiority, a creature discovers his own depths. The personal profound conscience (and not the simple psychological reflection) is ontologically simultaneous with the even more profound conscience of the presence of the person of the Spirit.¹²⁹ "The grace rooted in the human person becomes something proper and inseparable from nature, as if it would be of the same essence with man," St Macarius of Egypt says.¹³⁰ In these conditions, it is normal that the created being would participate truly to all the natural apophatic qualifications of the Uncreated Being. Man himself, in his inner being, knows himself still as an ineffable, paradoxical, and antinomic existence, as he in fact is in the strictest sense of the terms. The specific action of the Holy Spirit on the human creature strongly emphasizes the implicit and natural apophaticism of the

128 St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns*, Romanian translation by Prof. Fr. D. Stăniloae.

129 "For the soul sees itself in hell [the hell of passions] by the brilliance of light, that is, because no one else from those who are there knows himself before the divine light shines. They are kept in the ignorance of darkness, of corruption, and of death." St. Symeon the New Theologian, *ibidem*.

130 *Op. cit.*, *Homily VIII*, 2, p. 50.

deified man. "I will tell you of those that are in light," the same St. Symeon the New Theologian exclaims. "(The Spirit) makes me understand my foreign re-creation with which He recreated me... He made me untouchable, a miracle! As an unseen joined to the unseen ones... If I and the One to whom I was joined became one, how will I call me? God who is two according to nature but one hypostasis made me two as well, and making me two he also gave me two names, as you see... So that I say this again: from the joining I am one in two natures; so these two and one... are called homonyms with the name of the One with which they communed existentially."¹³¹ This is a wonderful and perfect page of apophatic anthropology to which there is nothing to add. The being fully assimilated to the Divinity can be appropriated, just like his Maker, only by the modes of apophatic knowledge.

If someone still tries a discursive-intellectual understanding of this ultimate mystery of man, the instinctive incomprehension for the order of the apophatic makes him see only a "vague poem"¹³² or simple metaphors, thus darkening the real image of the creature fully accepted into the communion with the living God.

With these pale considerations about the ultimate communications from the depths of the deified being—beyond which there is only the silence of an eternity to come—we arrived at the end of our attempt to capture what we called the fundamentals of apophatic anthropology. Time came for some specifications and clarifications. We will proceed regressively, starting from the states of gracious perfection. We have appreciated these states as the most representative for the value and destination of a human being, trying to shed light on the significance of

131 *Ibid.*

132 See *supra.*, p. 82.

the moments and interior stages up to the common level of a creature:

1. First, it is natural to emphasize again—as a prolegomena—the vigorous concrete reality of the notion of “deified being.” It expresses an effective co-possession of the two natures, created and uncreated, within the human hypostasis, which became holder of divine operations: the paradoxical assimilation by grace between man and God constitutes the apophatic moment by excellence of a creature embedded in the divine ineffable.

2. The deification by grace of our being represents the fruit of a double divine economy, that of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit, which are solidary in the history of universal and personal salvation. The substantial presence of the Spirit in the depths of being metamorphoses it into a profoundly Christological existence; it is not “imitated” exteriorly after Christ, but it reproduces interiorly, ontologically, the antinomic structure of the mono-hypostatic union in two natures, exemplary dogmatized at Chalcedon. As we have seen, we are, in both these cases, within an essentially apophatic universe, both in relation with the two Trinitarian Persons, as with the creature that participates to them.

3. Finally, according to all the data of revealed and patristic understanding, the inner structure of the deified being is modeled after the constitutive structure of any human being. The plenitude of our realization in God is inscribed as a real aptitude in the essence of a created being, at the level of the divine image and likeness in man. The apophatic anthropological view finds its first foundation and explicative cause in this structure which is specifically human. The essential and profound human, defined by the image and likeness of God, is a hidden and inconceivable man. This is because the image means a vivid communication of the divine incognoscibility, because man is a dynamic reality that unfolds in likeness, beyond limited conceptual determinations, and because he traces, paradoxically, the limits of our “infinite” transcendence in

the Spirit under the impulse of divine grace, and thus he cannot be inscribed in the categories of discursive knowledge.

Apophatic anthropology is an anthropology of the depths, and precisely because of this it also is an anthropology of the most concrete level of our being. The most human structure in man cannot (and must not) be reduced to (or exhausted by) the schematism of cataphatic knowledge. If it were so, a human creature would see itself deprived by the only viable foundation of its substantial participation to the True God, who is without a doubt a hidden God also.¹³³ The apophatic anthropology then discovers as a specific object of its investigation precisely this intimate structure of any human creature which it will try to circumscribe, as much as possible, in its characteristic manifestations and significations. A first delimitation of the problem will allow us to already affirm, based on the previous considerations, that our profound being hides two distinct regions, but still organically intertwined, fulfilling differently hierarchized functions in the physical and metaphysical universe of man.

Thus, the first region would correspond to the general potentialities of our divine image, structured on certain forms and ontological regimes, in virtue of which man constitutes himself as man: this is what we could call the inner man, "*homo absconditus*."

Deeper, we must imagine the ineffable center of being, the ontic nucleus and its true mysterious heart, the receiver subject of the supernatural presence, the one that ensures the eternal availability and openness toward the divine abyss, beyond our external consciousness or unconsciousness. This is the ultimate depth within us, the holy of holies, "*cor absconditum*."

133 "*Vere tu es Deus Absconditus, Deus Israel salvator*," Is., XLV, 15.

In this sense, we are entitled to expect to discover the truest image of our being, the sap as a quintessence of man, inside this final sanctuary of the mysterious heart. Thus, a human creature in the integrity of its existence, is summed and kept in the inner heart, beyond all external vicissitudes, beyond even the accident of sin. The mystery of presence is expressed in the hidden heart, just as mystery is expressed in the hidden man who has his roots in the heart. "*Homo absconditus*" and "*cor absconditum*" appear, then, as correlated stairs of a differently gradual interiority, but constituted unified in a true "mystical body" of a human being, which forms, in fact, the universe of the apophatic anthropology. While we step on these stairs, we can somewhat discern the universe of apophatic anthropology.

4. The Elements of a Synthesis

However, before going further, we feel tempted to end this chapter dedicated to the problem of apophaticism with an attempt to synthesize. As much as possible, we want to place the entire apophatic order under the sign of its largest signification, from the perspective of which the multiple apophatic meanings and modalities would focalize into a central and, by this, universal structure. We must confess from the beginning that we will be able to bring here rather presentiments and suggestions than perfect clarities. This does not mean that a humble part of truth may not be hidden under these fragile appearances.

Even if it is fast, an incursion in the strictly theological realm and in the anthropological one revealed apophaticism in its essential quality of constitutive category, which was established objectively in these orders of reality and not only as a simple juxtaposition or equivalence to others. This entitled us to affirm a preeminence of apophaticism within the profound spiritual universe and to distinguish a nuance and a gradation where one usually considers only one bloc, the one of the so-called apophatic or *negative* theology. We thus arrived to establishing the valuable and

efficient character of the apophatic gnosis, functioning not only in prohibitive sense, but also progressively, as a plus of knowledge conferred to a being that finds itself in a certain metaphysical posture. We thought that we could identify the essential factor (even if it is sometimes occulted) of apophatic knowledge in apophatic antinomy, so in that modality of installing the spirit into its own order, beyond the common categories of affirmation and negation by which one ensures simultaneously the heterogeneity of the terms of the correlation and their substantial unity. Here, where cataphatic knowledge would be insufficient for grasping the limit-realities (for it functions unilaterally and psychologically) and where pure theological negation would be limited to suggesting and preventing confusions, apophatic antinomy succeeds to introduce us on a plan of reality where concrete ontological antinomies encounter each other. Apophatic antinomy observes their inexpressible (and thus the permanence of apophaticism) being, but it also communicates them effectively, becoming thus the fundamental category of a most deep spiritual vision (historically, this is illustrated especially by the Fathers of the East). A certain autonomy of the apophatic attitude appears on these coordinates; it is somewhat sufficient to itself because, on the one hand, it is not reduced to pure negation and, on the other hand, it extracts its own vigor from the supreme apophatic order to which it was a real access. This is why, in a certain sense, it no longer feels obligated to return toward cataphatic knowledge because here, at the level of antinomy, cataphatism is exceeded and thus embedded into a largely comprehensive apophaticism. Even if an element of "positive" knowledge appears under this mode, the writing and the style specific to this attitude remains the apophatic because in its center there is always an incommunicable mystery¹³⁴ that is made

134 However—in order to reestablish the antinomic-truly communi-

visible by the necessary incompatibility of the members of the antinomic relation, unresolved by a logical-discursive synthesis.¹³⁵

Perhaps at the level of this fundamental aspect, the apophatic order will consent to reveal its essential secret, the one which confers its spiritual plenary significance.

The antinomic expression to which any consistent and lively unfolded apophaticism arrives is revealed to us by hiding within itself a structure most properly called crucial:^{xxviii} the terms of the antinomic relationship combine in the forming of the cross, as two contrary realities, but at the same time composite into an organic unity. The crucial structure is better emphasized by the distinctive particularity of the apophatic antinomy which maintains carefully the opposition of the correlated terms, refusing any leveling synthesis, negating on one side that which it affirms on the other. Thus, it maintains the integrality of the arms of the intelligible cross and finds in them the basis for an anagogical ascension, which is absent in non-contradictory wisdom. The folly of the cross is more powerful than the Aristotelian intelligence. Apophaticism is a reflex in the doctrinal, noetic order of the "deepest mystery of the cross." This is an affirmation that grasps, we hope, the essence of the problem of apophaticism and thus it is proper to insist on its implications.

Starting with the immediate reality, the cross is revealed to us as the most adequate iconographic sign for representing antinomy in general; in a special way, it also constitutes the categorical matrix of the spiritual antino-

cable equilibrium: the vision of the relation between essence and uncreated energies—the stumbling block of cataphatic theology, which is established explicitly on this objective, superessential paradox, remains, perhaps, the strongest expression of antinomic apophaticism.

135 See *supra*, pp. 87ff.

my. Even on the physical plan, the cross represents a *sui generis* naming of the contraries, a paradox: its arms absorb and focalize the divergent dimensions of the existence in a center of great symbolical density. A certain immanence (presence) of the Whole in center and of the Center in the whole is thus formulated under the image of the cross, on the dimensions of its iconographic canon. However, a symbolical reality can never be fully understood from its contemplation only, from beholding its external figure. Instead, it always requires to be completed with a transcendence within its own limits, so with the grasping of the initial metaphysical act which founds it and which it signifies. On the line of this deepening, we could say that the sign of the cross formulates iconographically (so it realizes theurgically) the mode of encounter and union between creature and Creator, union that necessarily takes on the antinomic form. This is where we find the basis of the cardinal function of the Cross in Creation. In the patristic universe, we find clear glimpses and expressions of the mysterious purpose accomplished by the Cross within creation. St. Gregory of Nyssa affirms, for example, that the image and the modality of the work of divine wisdom come by the unity of the contrary, so by a paradoxical dialectic. We will stop especially with St. Maximus the Confessor—probably the most synthetic thinker of the patristic ages—and we will look for the perfect understanding of the problem in his work. In two chapters from his gnostic centuries (where we find the “sanctuary of his thoughts”¹³⁶), St. Maximus writes: “The mystery of the incarnation of the Word comprises the meaning of all enigmas and symbols from Scripture, as well as the hidden science of all sensible and intelligible creatures. The one who knew the mystery of the cross and of the tomb under-

136 This is the expression of H.U. v. Balthasar, *Die gnostischen Centurien des Maximus Confessor*, Freiburg i. Br., 1941, p. 135.

stood the reasons of all these things; and the one who knew the mysterious meaning of resurrection also knew the purpose for which God established all things from the beginning." "All seen things are asked according to the cross, ... and the intelligibles need the tomb."¹³⁷ In another part, he tells us in what the mystery of the cross, with its multiple steps, consists: "[The Incarnation of the Savior] revealed, if we can say this, the most inner depth of the paternal goodness... the super-infinite advice of God... and it showed in itself the end for which creatures received the beginning of existence. It is for Christ, or for the mystery of Christ, that all the ages and those from within the ages received the beginning of existence and the end in Christ. Even before these ages, the union of the boundary (the definite) with the non-boundary (the indefinite) was pondered and established, the union of the measure with the lack of measure, of the margin with the infinity, of the Creator with the creature, of the stability with the movement."¹³⁸ We will not be able to sufficiently emphasize the central value that these two coordinated and reciprocally complementary series of texts represent for our problem: "Cross" and "mystical union between Creator and creature" are equivalent and invertible realities, different expressions by which the same supernatural and eternal plan of Divinity regarding His creature is said. We must emphasize that we are not here in the realm of pure speculation, but in the order of the strictest historical reality: the unifying encounter between God and creature was produced under the reign of Tiberius in 768 *ad urbe condita* through the cross, by this metaphysical tool that carried God-Man Jesus Christ on its arms, a living "paradox" and stumbling block for the searchers for wisdom.

137 St. Maximus the Confessor, *Centuria I about the knowledge of God*, ch. 66, 67.

138 *Ibidem: Qu. Ad. Th.*, question 60, *Fil. rom.*, III, p. 329.

The cross of Golgotha was rendered possible by another previous "cross," by the kenotic incarnation of the Lord; let us not forget that the dogma of the theandric union is a very intelligible concrete cross and the four terms of its antimony are disposed polarly, two by two, as on the arms of a cross. The union of the finite with the Infinite, which was accomplished exemplarily in the incarnation of the Savior and, since then, in the multitude of His saints, is an inherently antinomic act, as we said above (and as it appears in St. Maximus): the incommensurability of the essences coexists with and in the unity of the respective hypostasis. The Chalcedonian definition circumscribes dogmatically the dimensions of the eternal and primordial Cross for which and toward which the entire existence was projected from non-being to being. At the level of the cross and in the mode of the cross, the plenary, saving, and transfiguring encounter between man and God was realized and is being realized. If perceived from the inside, the profound and living communion between God and creature (especially when it is about the intelligible creature, man) is always revealed as a crucial antinomy that maintains the terms of the relation unmixed and unchanged, but also inseparable and undivided. In this sense, we said above that the Chalcedonian formula must be considered as the all-comprising category of the rapports of the creation with Divinity, by which the Cross of the divine work and presence in the world is expressed dogmatically,¹³⁹ and the incarnation of the divine Logos that founds it appears as an essential reality of the natural "reality," independent from the accidental modifications of the latter (fall, sin, etc.), but rather preceding it meta-

139 "The Cross was fixed in the earth and touched the heavens, not like a wood that reaches the heights, but *You by it filling all things*. Lord, glory to you!" *Octoih*, Wednesday, tone 3, sed. I, stih. I, *ap*. Arhim. B. Ghius, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

physically and thus containing in itself its meaning and reasons ("Whoever knew the mystery of the incarnation of the cross also understood the reasons of all things").

Of course, the dynamism of the cross does not stop here. The substantial communication of the Creator confers real deification, sainthood, resurrection, and immortality to a creature. The ineffable "mixture"¹⁴⁰ (*anakrásis*) between man and God, intelligible, also, only under the form of crucial apophatic antinomy, constitutes the ontological principle of the resurrection of a creature and the modality of its eternal life, during which being dies and rises mystically in the Lord, taken within the destiny of the Lamb slain in Heavens.¹⁴¹ Now the Cross becomes the heavenly sign of the resurrection, the ultimate icon of deification, the highest image of life: "the one who knew the mysterious meaning of the resurrection, also knew the purpose toward which God established all things from before."

It is time to closely consider the kinship which apophaticism has with these conjugated aspects of the mystery of the Cross. Being a sign of the power and wisdom of God, the Cross is not only an active force; it also is a presence open to our knowledge. We could even say that our virtues start working only with the realization of a just (or orthodox) knowledge of the Cross (just as, inverse-

140 The term of "mixture," as it is used here (and in some previous places), does not contravene the Chalcedonian notion (*asunchutos*, unmixed), which means rather "unfused" (see Fr. Stăniloae: *Curs de ascetică și mistică*, part II, p. 120) The union with God by deification knows, in fact, a complete interpenetration of human and divine essences, which maintain, however, antinomically, their own identities, without confusion. In this case, "mixture" expresses and emphasizes the organic unity of the new ontological compound, which is the deified being.

141 *Rev.* 5:6.

ly, knowledge is accomplished only by the effective engagement in its lively dynamic). The work of the Cross offers us, as we saw, cardinal moments: the incarnation, the crucifixion and the tomb (the Cross or the passion, in strict sense), the resurrection, and, of course, the ascension, with which the cycle of the cross ends. At the same time, the four primordial dimensions which lead to profound knowledge of God and of creation are revealed here. However, knowledge in any of these stages is necessarily apophatic knowledge because the stages represent successive steps in the realization of the eternal plan of the union between creature and Divinity, a union that can be fully and rightly expressed and understood only apophatically and antinomically. Without a doubt, the incarnation, the crucifixion, the tomb, the resurrection, and the ascension are realities with a large significance, present at all levels of understanding. Thus, they can be appropriated exteriorly as well, on the coordinates of common knowledge. However, this is not true knowledge imposed by their metaphysical content, the “orthodox” knowledge that would illuminate their significance and value from the inside.

On the cataphatic level, the moments of the encounter between the created being and its Supreme Principle are perceived exteriorly and analogically; they are decomposed in discursive categories that no longer communicate anything essential. The incarnation is a “logical” consequence of sin, and the theandric union is conceived morally, in a semi-Nestorian way, and the passion, death, and even the resurrection function in a quasi-juridical sense.¹⁴² On the contrary, the apophatic level expresses, in

142 *“Necessarium fuit Christum ex motis resurgere, non modo ad divinae iustitiae commendationem, ad fidei nostrae instructionem et spei erectionem, verum etiam ad vitae fidelium informationem et salutis nostrae*

fact, something more than knowledge: it is a transposition, an equivalent in the intelligible order of the crucial *objective* structure that is present inside any essential moment from the mystery of our salvation. Beginning with the incarnation and ending with the resurrection, apophaticism discovers in the steps of theandric union the mystery of the profound, substantial union of the creature with its Creator and communicates it faithfully under the form of apophatic antinomy. We are thus entitled to see in apophaticism an attitude deeply encrusted in the order of the spirit as a coextensive dimension of the Cross: the apophatic antinomy is the noetic expression of the cross understood plenary, and the cross is the initial form of the antinomic communication God-Creation (and, of course, its iconographical sign). Any time the creature encounters really and profoundly its Builder, it meets Him under the sign of the cross and under the noetic and existential species of apophaticism. It cannot be united with its Creator (and cannot know Him) linearly, on the horizontal dimensions of cataphatic understanding; not can it be united circularly or, rather, cyclically, as in an infinite, delirious, and agonizing evil, characteristic to the sterile pantheist visions, deprived of the living and hidden God.

Being the essential tool of our salvation, the Cross shows us one other face: it is the perfect sign of mysterious knowledge, the instrument of the propulsion of our spirit into the large ocean of divine mystery. A profound knowledge, an authentic knowledge, and a vivid knowledge of God and of His works is accomplished only by this lever that moves our being ontologically from the depths of the earth to the heights of heaven.¹⁴³

consumationem." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. De resurrectione Christi*. Pars. III, qu. LIII, art. 1.

143 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death He would die"

Through the perspective of the Cross, we are allowed to take a glance within the spirit of Christian thinking and thus distinguish the coordinates of “the mind of Christ” that became the property of the creature. The right Christian spirituality (“ortho-dox”) lives and is fulfilled in the living and personal paraphrasing of the meanings of the cross. The ascetic growth in perfection, which is accomplished factually by the practicing of virtue, is a true “ontology of the cross”: “any virtue that is worked is called cross when it fulfills the commandment of the Spirit,” according to the deep and subtle word of the Fathers of the desert.¹⁴⁴ Profound spiritual knowledge is developed from this substance. Strictly and specifically Christian, “the epistemology of the cross” is strange and not understood by the mind of the age because it is knowledge that has a charismatic character, born from the “great mind” of Christ and tending to the experience in the uncreated light of divine energies. The content of Christological thinking consists essentially in the apophatic contemplation of the transfiguring union between the created being and the Uncreated God by which the inner man becomes an authentic intelligible cross, knowing ineffably as a god within God by the mind of the crucified Christ.

“The work of the Cross is twofold,” St. Isaac of Syria tells us, “and this is because of our double nature, made out of two parts. The first one is the suffering of the trou-

(*John* 12:32–33) or still, “Being lifted up on the wood, O, Master, you have lifted up all creation from the terrible dungeons of ignorance to the knowledge of You, o, Lover of men.” *Octoih*, Friday, tone 7, ode V, stih. I, *ap.* Arhim. B. Ghius, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

144 St. Mark the Ascetic, cited by St. Isaac of Syria in *Cuvinte ascetice* (*Ascetic Words*), Cuv. XIX. Of course, this is about the spiritual, metaphysical meanings of the cross, and not about its historical and psychological aspects that are characteristic especially to the stages of incipient or exterior spirituality.

bles of the body that is accomplished in the fast part of the soul (will) and is called work (action). The other is *the subtle work of the mind in divine thinking, in life in prayer and in others* (my underline) in the sensible part of the soul, and this is called vision (contemplation)."¹⁴⁵ The deified man contemplates and illumines all things through the cross, as through the physical and metaphysical sign of the entire and substantial real presence of God in the depths of his own being.

"To some, the sign of the cross was shown in light and was fixed in the inner man," St Macarius of Egypt says in a curious text.¹⁴⁶ We can also distinguish here the crucial sense of the action of the Spirit in the intimacy of the being which It rises to a new life.

The trajectory of our salvation reproduces personally and at the level of each one of us the exemplary cross of the encounter and union with God. Our profound existence must know and consume incarnation, crucifixion, death, and resurrection in order to reach (sometimes even during the limits of our temporal duration) the uncreated light of the transfiguration which assimilates us unmixed and unchanged, undivided and inseparable with the depths of Divinity. Such an interior regime imposes to knowledge a charismatic character. This is why the natural exterior projection of this interior regime will necessarily be the apophatic view, consubstantial to the cross, the form of knowledge and communication of God's real and perfect dwelling in all his things, present even now, in this age. This dwelling will become visible for all only with the resurrection of the future age. One more time, "the one who knows the mystery of the cross and of the tomb also knows the reasons of all things; and the one who further penetrates the mysterious meaning of resurrection also

145 See Isaac of Syria, *op. cit.*, cuv. XXX.

146 St. Macarius of Egypt, *op. cit.*, *Om. VIII*, p. 51.

knows the purpose for which God established all things from the beginning.”

III. HOMO ABSCONDITUS

...sed qui absconditus est cordis homo

1 Peter 3:4

1. The Dimensions of Being

The evidently composite character of a human being probably constitutes one of the main ways of access to our innerness. We do not formulate a paradox here, but we only try to separate one of the meanings of the ontological multiplicity that is specific to man. Indeed, it is known that man is an existence composed out of different, even disparate, elements and existences. The organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate, soul and body, nature and supra-nature are combined and melted in the composition of a being that is found full in each of these and cannot last in the absence of any of these. Thus, human nature is characterized by a unique situation: our being is a synthetic multiplicity not by accident or by an external attribute, but by nature and by an internal regime of existence. The integrity and uniqueness of human nature is normally and originally ensured precisely by the multitude of separate "natures" that concur to its totality. However, following this, the problem of the principle of the univocity of being appears: if human nature is presented as the place of convergence of certain distinct powers and activities, if experience reveals to us the synergy of all its component parts, it means that a factor of unity sustains the human ensemble "from the inside," even if it can appear fairly heteroclite and instable from the outside. Let us not forget that each of the composing elements of being is driven into an inevitable dynamism that ensures life for the whole. Thus, if the natural composite is changeable and in a perpetual becoming exteriorly, some place inside there is also an element of stability by which the formal and concrete univocity of the composite human structure is established. Further, it also ensures its permanence in and beyond the successive transformations that work it in all senses. In is

in this sense that we said above that it is precisely the multipolar character of human nature that necessarily implies and calls for its reversal, the internal aspect of being, the environment of its entitative unity. For a human creature, "nature" does not constitute the ultimate substrate of its existence, the reality that exhausts the content of man. It is overcome by and assumed to a higher principle to which it leads and which is, in fact, the specific attribute of our being. A human being is presented first as a personal existence, as a hypostasis; this truth is so essentially and profoundly human that it could not be recognized immediately in the natural structure of being; instead, a laborious investigation of philosophical thinking (almost an intellectual revelation) was needed to discover it and consecrate it. In the human hypostasis, human nature realizes a different ontological modality—the hypostatic modality by excellence—and stops being an aggregate of qualities and tendencies that neutralize themselves reciprocally, as in the case of other natures. Although nature and hypostasis are not categories substantially different (the hypostasis does not add any new content to nature), one modal difference (and thus also a hierarchy) appears stringently: a human person is the entire human nature and, at the same time, something more than that, something *beyond* that, because the ensemble of our being is wrapped in totality by the hypostatic principle, by the person, and is expressed in it and by it.

We will not insist too much on the personal condition of a human being because we will later encounter this problem and its meanings (and we will reconsider there a part of the themes anticipated here); we will only add that *because of his hypostasis* man becomes a universe, a cosmos, and so a physical and spiritual organism. His ontological trajectory does not unfold on one and the same level of existence only, as in a fully flat world, lying only on two dimensions. Instead, because he is a hypostatic being, a personality in the strongest sense, the various moments of his life are combined, stratified, and built in a certain way,

in a personal structure. Regardless of how strange and heterogeneous to man these initial elements would be, our being encounters and assumes them during its life, succeeds to assimilate them completely, integrating them by its hypostasis and thus realizing the univocity of all the levels of its nature. The component parts are combined in man in a very meaningful architectonic, engaging every element of the configuration for the accomplishment of a superior unity that can participate at the inferior layers (the condition of the organism) and thus making both the whole and its parts function univocally. Due to the eminently spiritual factor, human nature is engaged toward spirit, toward the plenary spiritualization of the human composite, as if toward the unique and most important purpose of its total existence. The moment it is comprised in the category of the hypostasis, the structure of a human being becomes transparent and expressive for the spirit, and the spirit becomes the only one that is able and indicated to explore the depths of being. In the virtue of the intimate hypostatic con-penetration, the ontological regions of the creature are assimilated to the spiritual destiny of a person. Man no longer lives only the sum of the natural lives that compose him, but he obtains his own personal dimensions, and this is something radically different. These dimensions are the expression of the profound structure of being, from which they leave and to which they converge; they allow us to establish the metaphysical typology of a human person, leading us according to the revealed dimensions of the spirit itself. The spirit also possesses—even before the physical universe—a structure, an organicity, a hierarchy of causes and values; St. Paul brings our attention to this when he asks us “to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height” of the world of the Spirit.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ *Eph.* 3:18.

Of course, even if they are first and foremost characteristic to the universe of the Saints' contemplation (and thus revealed in Scripture to an extent), the dimensions of the spirit correspond to the general, natural structure of every human being that requires to be completely unfolded according to their canon. Thus, as we said above, these cardinal directions do not diversify being, crumbling its unity, but they trace, on the contrary, the coordinates of the noetic and ontological integrity of man, his personal cross, we could say. The plenitude of a human creature (the *pleroma* of the anthroposphere) is realized by the convergence of all the arms of this cross, and not of only some of them. From our perspective, we could considerate the parallel significance (ontological and gnoseological) of the dimensions of being (evidently, with all the necessary reserve for such appreciations) in this way: the length would symbolize the trajectory specific to the material, corporal level of our being, obligated by the ontological ballast of the body to move on individual directions; from a noetic perspective, the same dimension would correspond to immediate, common knowledge, and it places all things on the same level of understanding. The width could indicate the region of affective and conative life which organizes sympathetically and actively the interhuman communion, the unceasing enlargement of personal existence to comprise within it other existences; for the dimensions of knowledge, the quantitative increase of the known elements, organized in a rational, "psychological" mode, could be designated here. The height introduces us in the superior, properly noetic zones of the pure intellect, which is at the same time faculty of knowledge and level of existence for being; it is the organ of the ascension of "natural contemplation" (in a generic sense, not strictly theological) due to which a creature realizes, at different stages, the ample, meta-rational understanding of reality. Finally, "the fourth dimension," depth, is characteristic to the center, to the hidden essence of being, the place of the presence of the Spirit. The hidden man lives here, the ul-

timate interiority of our existence, the human absolute; human personality has its origin here, the one that is manifested on the three previous dimensions. Depth is, in fact, the dimension of the mysterious heart, so of the ineffable nucleus of a human being; the specific mode of knowledge of the depth is apophaticism, so precisely the transcending of clear and distinct categories of discursive knowledge. No one among the geometers enters into the profound heart; if the other three Euclidian dimensions of being could be integrated to the principles of the Aristotelian common reason, the heart has its "antinomic logic" that cataphatic knowledge ignores. We can arrive to the hidden man of the heart if we rather descend on the line of his outside manifestations. As we saw above, the very condition of our mysterious core is to be manifested externally while remaining hidden in this manifestation, and not to form an obscure residuum that would justify agnosticism. The depth of being (so the hidden man) represents nothing else than the divine image in our being; if this remains unknowable by rational concepts, it can still be appropriated and circumscribed in virtue of communications, processions, or exteriorizations that emerge from its ineffable and unknowable center. Or, the strongest manifestation of our depth, the one that embraces and defines the entire being, is the personality, the human hypostasis, the stamp of the metaphysical distinction of a human creature.

The properties of the hidden interiority are communicated to the hypostasis so plenary that, although not the ultimate center of being, the hypostasis could still be rightly considered the divine "image" of man, at its own level. In fact, the virtues of the ineffable image that dwells in our depth irradiate and become active by it, so, in a certain sense, an identity subsists between these two regions that does not exclude the reality of their distinction. Thus, in order to reach the hidden image of man, we must go first through his exterior expression; we must descend on

the dimensions of the hypostasis toward the depths of the heart, where the image of God in us resides.¹⁴⁸

2. The Hypostatic Image

[this is where the manuscript ends]

148 See *Ps.* 26:8: “My heart speaks to You; my face seeks You; Your face, O Lord, I will seek.”

ATTEMPT TO AN INTRODUCTION TO AN APOPHATIC ORTHODOX ANTHROPOLOGY

NOTE

This text has at least two formal shortcomings: a too great density of the content and expression, and a certain lack of unity among its parts. In lieu of explanation, we have to show that it represents on the whole an excerpt from an older and larger paper with the same title, dating from 1951–1952. Chapter I^{xxix} originates from another essay adjacent to the first, about the equivocal in modern philosophy. External circumstances having to do with the short time in which the present work was written did not allow the rendering of the initial text in its entirety, nor its explanation and fusion with the text of the other paper.

FORWARD

Regardless of its prudence, this title can provoke perplexity and demand clarifications or even justifications from the beginning.^{xxx} Generally speaking, anthropological themes need a supplementary determination added to their enunciation. This is significant for the situation of man and of the disciplines that are consecrated to him. It is never sufficient to proclaim that you would speak of man; what is necessary is to specify (and the difficulty begins here) the point of view from which you, as man, embrace man, the light under which you are placed in order to illumine the so complex and enigmatic object of your research. Anthropology appears only from this point forward; it does not rise from a simple description of man, but rather from his own detachment from himself, from the discovery of an authentic transcendence by which a human being could be embraced and not torn; in this, its unity perceived in its uniqueness and also its knowledge would become act—or even gesture—of spirituality. This is par excellence the human moment of man and because of that it is so difficult to accomplish it. However, regardless of the conditions in which it is developed, the anthropological meditation remains precious through its implications. Man's returning toward himself (self re-flection), even if it is partial, truncated, or unsuccessful, participates and carries within itself something from the meaning and absolute value of the great return toward ourselves in conversion, when we discover ourselves in God. Thus, anthropological researches are particularly significant for man's situation directly, considering their results, but especially indirectly. Here are in brief two mediated meanings, which are included in any study of man about man and are of interest here.

First, we encounter the problematic character of a human being, including here its historical existence. This comes to us as fundamental fact and thus not immediately obvious. Man can become an issue for anything: for knowledge, ethics, or activity; for philosophy, science, or

sociology. This is because all problems have their origin in man and wait for their solutions from him, and not because man were a problem that waits for its solution from and within the other categories mentioned above, as he often wants to believe. There is no other problem that is equivalent to the problem of man, can substitute it, or can be resolved in advance in order to offer an integral and authentic solution for man. As long as man remains a problem, everything is problematic. Even the fact of perceiving himself as a problem is no longer another problem for a human being, but rather a more profound beginning, a mystery, and a sign. It is the sign of his religious situation, the proof that we cannot understand man unless beginning with what is superior and at the same time essentially constitutive to man, so with his absolute rapport to God. We will be then able to see why the theme of anthropology as philosophical discipline was raised only for religious sensibilities and in eras with a religious structure (even with "humanist religions").

Second, any act by which a human being attempts to get to know itself reveals something essential about man's position toward cosmos and history. Man is a disputed reality, claimed by several instances of reality, requested in several directions, to the point of confusion and tearing, assaulted by innumerable formulas in which he always finds something in kinship with his own nature, search and restlessness. His internal and external duration is constituted not only out of the resistance and the continual answer to all situations that confirm or contest him, but especially out of his creative attitude by which it dominates, assimilates, and transcends its foreign or hostile elements, accomplishing himself in this personal process. In each anthropological conception, system, or vision, we find something from the concrete position of man who is engaged in the activity of self-realization. Regardless of whether he is aware of it or not, he is permanently responsible for it. From this perspective, anthropological doctrines fulfill also the function of being a document of

the age: they express and manifest the spiritual moment of man's position in relation with God. This positioning also entails his situation in his respective world and age. Thus, the elaboration of a serious anthropology cannot be an act of abstract speculation; it is rather "contemplation," in the sense used by the Fathers: an insight in the reality of a fact by God's vision.

These things being said, the expression "apophatic anthropology" probably discovers a beginning of justification. It is about leading a study, a meditation about man in the light of the apophatic notion, perceived in fact to be different and more than a notion: it is a mode of actualizing and knowing a creature's connection with its Creator. We agreed above that the "explanation" of man could only be found in his relationship with God. Even if we accept this truth, the problems subsist, but they are now transposed on a different level. Quite often, anthropological conceptions, which were decisive in their historical function, were constituted within discursive, logical, and to an extent "naturalized" theologies. Thus, they would not prove to be able to finally embrace the essential mystery of a human being. We only need to consider the anthropologies that are tributary to Catholic theology, as it was formulated in the Middle Ages, or to those elaborated by contemporary Protestant theology. Their staring point—the created being perceived in its pure nature, aggravated or not by sin—and their expressed or only suggested conclusions—humanist optimism or existential pessimism—circumscribe the problem of man and his rapport with God. They give this problem a new frame, but they remain external to it. One cannot see whether the fault rests with the theology, the anthropology, or with both of them. However, are we not to have a point of theological perspective by which the problem of man could be firmly placed, from the beginning, in communion with the revelation of God, so that it could be screened from the "contamination of the natural" and the illusion of the reabsorption in "pure spirit"? In other words, can we find the

strongly Christian dimensions of an anthropology that could reconstitute the profound man, in the uniqueness of his presence before God and in the uniqueness of his presence in the world?

Perhaps the question is too harsh; however, it wants to suggest that the answer cannot be the result of an intellectual construction, but only the recognition of something given in revelation. This given would be the apophatic view as it was transmitted to us by the dogmatic and spiritual tradition of the Eastern Church.

Apophatic theology can be considered only a complement of "normal" cataphatic theology, another mode of expressing systematically the knowledge of God. In fact, this is how it has been presented in the western dogmatic treatises. However, when the profound spiritual structure expressed in the writings of the Eastern Fathers began to be researched, it became obvious that the apophatic attitude represents more than a theological conception among others. It rather appears to be truly the spiritual view that is characteristic to the Orthodox Orient. Without a doubt, in such cases, the categorical affirmations are necessary but also very difficult. The forbidden generalizations that can result from here easily deform and impoverish reality. While acknowledging, of course, that orthodox Christian life also contains other forms or ways of spiritual expression, it remains that the apophatic constitutes a fundamental coordinate for it, being present in all acts that define its concrete spirituality, beginning with the daily liturgical experience to the heights of inner prayer. We are here before what could be called, by borrowing philosophical terminology, a metaphysical view that is well delineated in its internal articulations and, at the same time, completely free in rapport with its external determinations. This is because it was not born in an alliance with the systems of natural philosophy, but it rather expresses a plenary spiritual experience, both personal and universal, that is ecclesiological. Within this richly expressed experience, next to the more known elements of traditional

apophatic theology, we also find the main elements of an implicit apophatic anthropology, so the image of man seen in what is essential to him and beyond the categories of natural understanding. In an attempt to briefly detach a few themes of such anthropological meditation, we will begin with a rushed research of a few anthropological systems in which man searched for the solution of his problem. We will then analyze the structure and the facets of theological apophaticism, showing at the end what could constitute the content and the meaning of an apophatic anthropology.

Such an attempt can only be imperfect, undertaken in forms such as the present one. Its only justification, the inner rest of meditation, is not present here, due to some external reasons. Approached from any angles, it could be said that these things are more faithfully served by being silent concerning them rather than speaking as it is done now.

I. MAN SEARCHING FOR HIMSELF

Before being the object of study for a discipline, man is the subject of his own history. He is manifested in rapport to himself and discovers himself in his acts. The complex history of humanity expresses man's latent and perpetual attempt to finally find himself plenary. The main stages of this search are the moments assumed on the fundamental trajectory of being, which leads to the encounter with God. We will realize how the anthropological tendencies that we distinguish in the unfolding of history are more fundamental than history itself. Contrary to appearances, history is an event of man, and not man a product of history. We say this in order to justify, on the one hand, the freedom with which we will accompany man in his search for his own meaning, associating eras that are distanced and dissociating things that are contemporary only in appearance. On the other hand, we do it in order to retain in this succinct exploration the elements that indicate, beyond themselves, the apophatic meaning of being.

The first type of anthropology (its anteriority is also chronological, not only logical) is offered by Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy was the first to have the revelation of man as bearer of reason, of logos, and it established its certitudes on this revelation. If we search deeper the grounds for these certitudes, we will uncover that they are not placed above man, nor within being itself, but rather in the inferior region of natural existence. This is why they could not sustain man for a long period. For Greek Philosophy, man was carried by the universe and was strongly supported in all of his acts. Universe is an order, a "cosmos," not only because it is permeated by reason and ordered according to rational laws, but also because the very substance of things is reason and because man, a small part of this cosmic substance, of this intelligent and divine cosmos, is himself reason or rational animal, as Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics wanted it. Using reason means discovering in us God and cosmos, or that which unites us intimately with divinity or with the universe. Reason is

then the essential foundation of man, the unwavering rock on which he is sustained.

The Greek philosopher's trust is immediate and natural. It expresses man's certainty in the world and in existence. The Greek miracle, which produces a true fascination in European thinking even today, consists in this primordial solid certitude. In fact, this is something completely opposed to "miracle": far from seeing the supernatural meaning of a human being (which would have been truly wonderful), Greek philosophy naturalized man and his existence, casting out the possibility of miracle.

All these things became clear only when the miracle was truly produced, and in a different place than Greek philosophy. The Logos appears in the world, is incarnate, dies on the cross, and rises: all these are events, not philosophy. Their proclamation will be an eternal scandal for "natural reason," forced to recognize that what it considered reason might have been in fact folly.

Christian anthropology revealed in its center a different image of man and even a new man, ontologically speaking, a being totally overturned in relation to the classic image of Greek philosophy. In it, the nature of man consists precisely in not being strictly natural, but rather in realizing a break in the world, an absolute novelty in creation. The essential mystery of man is the image and likeness of God in him, and not his integration in external nature. This is why the problem of man remains decidedly insoluble for anyone who considers him from the point of view of nature and only in correlation with it. A human being can be understood only in its rapport with God, and this rapport, although perfectly "human" in one of its sides, is still not purely natural. The living God transcends reason completely, and man, being a participant to the divine being, is also, in a way, beyond the categories of natural understanding. From now on, anthropology will have to choose between these two paths of appropriating man: one is natural, philosophical (in a generic sense),

and cataphatic; the other is pneumatic, interior, and apophatic.

The implicit or explicit anthropological doctrines that dominate and constitute the philosophical tradition of humanity have engaged especially on the first path. Of course, the inheritance of Catholic anthropology contributed to this. According to it, man is created as natural being and the created grace of the contemplation of God and union with Him is communicated to him only by an independent act. Even if being loses these gifts in the fall, it is not touched as natural creature. Such an anthropology, founded on the decisive distinction between nature and grace and leaving in a shadow the doctrine of divine image, stays at the origin of the naturalist conception of man, by which the old pre-Christian philosophical theme takes hold again of the meditation about man. The process is long and often tragic, and problems rather than solutions in anthropology appear in its course. "*Quaestio mihi factum sum*"¹—I have become a question for myself. This is what philosophical anthropology will always say together with St. Augustine, from whom the new era begins.

Human thought is faced with a double exigency: the imprescriptible exigency of Christian faith, which is to search for support only in God, and the new exigency of philosophical foundation. The philosophical ability of Blessed Augustine managed to meet these two seemingly exclusive exigencies by melting them into one. Deepening the foundation of shaken Greek certitudes, St. Augustine discovers the efficacious presence of God in his most intimate intimacy, in the heart of truth, in the source of reason. God-the Creator is Himself universal reason, the truth of the philosopher, the meaning of any thing and the spring of any rational thought. If God, being, and rea-

1 Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 33, 50 (n. ed.).

son are one, faith in the God of Christians will be able to serve as philosophical certitude to the people: *verus philosophus est amator Dei*.² This Augustinian solution has a capital importance for the subsequent development of philosophy; beginning with this moment, for entire centuries, God, the supreme Being, and the supreme Truth will constitute the support and the foundation of a philosophical act.

The Augustinian fusion between reason and faith is not deprived of risks for the purity of faith as well as for the independence of reason. This is the first great philosophical ambiguity, revealing the fact that, from this moment, philosophy, as an absolute formula, will only be possible in equivocal and illusion. Thomas Aquinas acknowledged this clearly. The Christian demand of faith and the philosophical need for substantiation, awakened in fact by Christian thought, do not coincide, and they both request that reason and faith must be carefully distinguished. He enounces then the famous principle that it is possible to have faith and science simultaneously in regard with the same object. It became more imperative than any other time to remove any trace of faith from philosophy and to ensure to reason a perfect independence in relation with faith. Reciprocally, the independence of Christian faith in relation with philosophical thinking would also be saved in its turn. Expelled by reason, faith remains in its proximity as the eternal sign of another order than the one of nature and of another exigency than the one of reason. However, in the same gesture, Thomas Aquinas acknowledges the independence of reason in relation with this order of faith. The situation became bizarre and unsustainable; with the Angel of School, Greek philosophy reestablishes things in its advantage, having an implicitly divine foundation, now Christian, a certitude taken for

2 *Ibidem*, *De Civitate Dei*, VIII, 1 (n. ed.)

granted which ensures naturally the autonomy of reason. The Thomist synthesis also ends in equivocation.

What followed was almost inevitable. Christian spiritual values are secularized more and more; since the primitive (and false at the core) ingenuity of Greek anthropology is forever lost, the departure from the Christian truth about man takes the aspect of drama and despair. Descartes was the first to try a radical reconstruction, aiming for finding the certitude that would not owe anything to the authority of revelation, that would no longer have any connection with a belief or an opinion, and that would be of a rational evidence without stain. In one point, and only in one, thought and existence are immediately connected for Descartes; philosophical knowledge is not established on naïve faith or unconsciousness, nor on tradition, on Christian faith, or on faith in reason, but on itself, on the conscience of the thinking ego. However, the sought-after certitude cannot spring from here; Descartes rushes to return to God, and we immediately acknowledge that for him the evidence of the *cogito* does not aim to give a foundation to reason, but rather to compose in a more philosophical way a rational God who, in his turn, will give foundation to philosophy. Thus, after a perhaps unnecessary detour, we find again the very traditional conception of medieval philosophy. It has a new nuance: God is no longer truth or reason, but He only guarantees human reason and the value of its approaches. Such an idea about God, or such a God-idea, will not be able to last for a long time; for Kant, being expelled from knowledge and the metaphysical world, God is a support only for morality.

However, metaphysical aspiration cannot give up its natural object, the absolute. Thus, the final act of secularization is produced: absolute value is moved from God to man. Philosophy discovers more and more decidedly a new root and foundation in man himself. Again, this is an equivocation. The God of philosophers was not the living and authentic God, and the man of philosophy is not the

profound, integral, and true man. A human being justifies the attention that it receives provided that it is seen as bearer of God. Its value would then be truly incommensurable and its depth without end, and not by itself, but by the God of Whom it is an image. However, the fixation on man and the progressive hypertrophy of self-conscience, precisely in the moment when it believes that it can no longer touch nor admit the transcendent, denounce the ambiguity of this philosophical mode that is constituted only out of inauthenticity and artifice. Its fundamental axiom—the nothingness in the heart of being—is irrelevant for the essential problem of man. If the annihilation of being is conceived as possible, it is no longer “to be done”: it is already done, and it depends on the constitution and the nature of this being that is given to us, about which it can be said that it is supported on primordial nothingness, in which it could always fall if it did not come from it at every moment. Thus, the question that can no longer be avoided is about the meaning and the origin of this nothingness inside the creature. This opens up the metaphysical problematic from its beginnings.

From what has been said so far, it results that man holds out at the treatment of philosophy by searching objective knowledge of the object of his knowledge. He never becomes a docile object for knowledge, but rather maintains his essential mystery untouched, charging though with new and eternally renewed problems the attempts to completely penetrate it. God alone, in an eminent mode, manifests this absolute transcendence in rapport to usual knowledge. The insistence on grasping man's essence by the categories of philosophical knowledge ends necessarily in the tearing of being. If anthropology has metaphysical sources and foundations, this is not for abstract reasons, but because man is also a concrete meta-physical existence, with a life that does not belong to the external world, but also to the extra-worldly world. The failures of anthropological systems, whether implicit or explicit, do not come so much from ignoring

this truth, but rather from the inability to comprehend it in its paradoxical unity, situated beyond the natural tendencies and schemes on which they usually move, against the nature of man. In all attempts of philosophical anthropology, two tendencies are expressed, which are produced precisely by the loss of the fundamental view of being and which indirectly testify for it.

One of these tendencies presents to us a unified human being, or, better said, unified forcefully either by the spirit that became an abstraction or by the nature that became an element of confusion and dissolution. "Pure," abstract spirit desires to liquidate the scandal of human existence, reabsorbing within itself what is akin to it in being and abandoning the rest of internal forces. On its turn, nature tends to melt the complex structure of a human being in its homogenous undifferentiating, targeting a state of confusion between time and eternity and a placement into parentheses of the personal duration of man. The second tendency acknowledges the parallel existence of the two components in the structure of a human being, but it does not succeed in intuiting the mystery of their personal unity. Man is seen here mechanistically, as a provisory jointing of body and soul, a fortuitous composition that is maintained by the play of immanent actions and interactions. It is not difficult to identify in these two tendencies the monist attitude and the dualist one, both being inherent to philosophical knowledge. However, none of them can comprise the integral image of man, his antinomic essence that is established on the unity of contraries and is maintained by them. Rigorously speaking, philosophical anthropologies are under the sign of heresy: they are partial, they vacillate between monophysitism and Nestorianism, between amputation and laceration. An "Orthodox" anthropology will have to have its roots be-

yond them, in the hidden man who is well placed with fear before the hidden God.³

3 In the bachelor's thesis of 1956, this is followed by chapters II "God in self-discoveries" and III "God and man in the cross." They reprise, making it considerably shorter, the text of the sub-chapters 1, 2, and 3 from chapter II of the version published here of the *Apophatic Anthropology* (n. ed.)

TEXTS FROM THE ANTIM MONASTERY

I. PROLEGOMENA TO AN ONTOLOGY OF THE MONASTIC STAGE

– Βίος ἀγγελικῶς –¹

The monastic order that is dedicated to contemplation, glorification, and penitence is the most precious and, at the same time, the most hidden part of the Church.

In the middle of this world, the order is the anticipation and the inchoation in the Jerusalem from above. In glorification, the monks accomplish the angelic liturgy, in mystery, and thus this liturgy is already made present among us. In virginity, they are the prefiguration of the resurrected life (the one after resurrection), which has already begun in Christ: *Si consurrexistis cum Christo*.² They achieve the perfect community, the spiritual community of Ἀγάπη, superior to all human communities. We must say even more: they are more necessary to the world than scholars, generals, and ministers.^{xxxii} They are the salt of the earth, which protects the world from decay.

This means that they are more important than anything in the life of the Church, that they are more precious to us than the light of our eyes. We know that Anthony,^{xxxiii} the father of monks, buried himself^{xxxiii} into the wilderness not in order to run from the world, but rather to confront Satan in his realm, in the spiritual war that is “more bloody than men’s battles.” It is Anthony, in his wilderness, who made the demonic powers retreat, and not Constantine, in his palace. Since then, the presence of Anthony’s disciples, of the hermits, and of the cenobites is

1 Another title at the beginning of the text: “The Monastic Life and Its Current Problems—Introduction to Βίος ἀγγελικῶς” (*n. ed.*)

2 “If you rose together with Christ” (In Latin). See *Col.* 3:1: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” See also *Mk.* 16:19, *Jn.* 8:23, *Rom.* 8:34 (*n. ed.*)

that which prevents the powers of Satan from flooding over the world and swallowing it. It is impossible not to shudder when we think of what the world would become if the prayer of the saints were to cease, for a moment, its unseen protection between mankind and the powers of evil.

And yet, we need to acknowledge that there is a crisis of the contemplative and monastic life.

We have a duty to take care of it, precisely because we depend on it, because we need it. It is not because contemplative and monastic life would no longer attract souls to itself. On the contrary, there has never been a time when so many young men and women came to knock at the gates of monasteries. Also, it cannot be said that their lives were less ardent inside of them. There are so many monasteries that constitute true centers of radiant holiness!

However, it keeps being a fact that among the young people who are attracted by contemplative life and enter monasteries, there are so many who cannot stay. This is the problem.

We raise it here so that it may become a matter of concern for us because it matters to all of us.

We must first find its reasons. Several of them can be immediately noticed. Some of them are of physical order: today, many people's constitution can no longer bear certain conditions of cold, deprivation, and lack of sleep. Is this a reason to remove these conditions from monastic life? It is not about weakening the rule given by the Holy Fathers, but rather to take into account their right statutes.

Other reasons are more internal. A contemplative monastery needs people who can offer strong spiritual support, counselors who are wise and tried in life, and adequate and favorable conditions of life. But how many monasteries are not deprived of such previous spiritual assistances? Is there a large enough solicitude for this portion of the flock of Christ, for which we should reserve

what is best? On the other hand, contemplation must be rooted in meditation on Scripture and the Fathers, in “holy reading” (*lectio divina*), which is necessary to feed it. This presupposes an intellectual work. However—we must acknowledge it—this work is often ignored. Under a false pretext of evangelical humbleness—but this is only a parody of the true spirit of becoming like little children^{xxxiv}—a devaluation of intellectual work insinuates itself, which is, at the core, sloth of the spirit that discourages certain excellent vocations.

These few observations want to be only the first elements in view of resolving a serious problem. There is another labor that is useful, one that would consist in showing the significance of contemplative life. This can help in bringing to the fore the essential, the spirit, to which the letter is at times an enemy. The following pages represent such an attempt, inspired by the meditation of primitive monasticism and the contemporary liturgical movement.

“We have a city in which we are all citizens, and this city is in heaven.”^{3xxxv} There is a corollary to this: “For here we have no enduring^{xxxvi} city,”⁴ so we do not have a stable political body, one which is to stay.

This antithesis between the two cities—the one in heaven, toward which we go, and the one on earth, which we have left or, better, we leave at every moment—is constitutive for the existence of a monk insofar as it is, first and foremost, constitutive for the existence of a Christian in the world.

A monk is a man who is filled with new life, the new being which begins in baptism, so that there is no place left in him for anything else, for the things of the “old man,” of “this world.”

3 *Philokalia* III, p. 20.

4 *Heb.* 13:14.

This life, the life of Christ, the life of the new era (eon), we all have it through baptism, but it remains hidden, although very real. The new eon began with Christ's Ascension, when He placed His risen, glorified, "pneumatic" humanity to the right hand of the Father. And yet this humanity is also our humanity, the humanity with which the Logos has made himself one in the womb of the Virgin: *Dominus noster, unigenitus Filius tuus, unitam sibi fragilitatis nostrae substantiam in gloriae tuae dextera collocavit*,⁵ the Roman Church sings in the mess of the Ascension.

Thus, we too have risen to heaven together with Christ. Baptism made us partakers to Christ's death and resurrection: "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."⁶ "As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."⁷

We have here a true *Encheiridion* of monastic life, as we will see. However, because the entire Christian life has its foundation here, let us only notice, for the moment, that we do not have to give to "the old man" and to "the new life" moral meanings only, but rather that we have here an ontological reality from which will unfold, of course, consequences for conduct in life, for ethics. Baptism is a mystery of death and resurrection, but resurrec-

5 "Our Lord, Your Son One born, uniting with our fragile nature, placed it at the right of Your glory," *Communicantes*, "The Mess of Ascension" (*n.ed.*).

6 *Col.* 2:12.

7 *Rom.* 6:3–5.

tion gets accomplished and finds its crown at the ascension. Then, the Logos who had descended in the world by incarnation brings back triumphantly to the Father the lost sheep, humankind, which He redeemed and liberated from the chains of death, of sin, and of the devil—and He is greeted in His passing by the worship of all the angelic hierarchies among which He rises after He crossed the sensible cosmos. Now, this humanity enters together with Him in the dominion of glory that God has destined for Adam.

Baptism then makes us residents of heaven. “But God... made us alive together with Christ..., and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the regions above the heavens in Christ Jesus.”^{8xxxvii} We have become citizens of heaven, fellow citizens with the angels who dwell around God, in the sphere that is above the sensible sky. This city, in which we are not *hospites et advenae*, *sed [con]cives Sanctorum et domestici Dei*,⁹ the Jerusalem above, which is our mother,¹⁰ is the city of the angels and of the saints: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the Jerusalem above the heavens,^{xxxviii} to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven (as citizens)^{xxxix}.”¹¹ City, assembly, Church (*ecclesia*), registration: the cumulative enumeration of terms borrowed from the political life of the city is significant. (But the acts that, by excellence, constitute the *polis* are as much cultural as they are political.) A Christian is a citizen of the heavenly city, the city of angels, which Christ opened for us by entering it.

8 *Eph.* 2:4–6.

9 “Strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (*Eph.* 2:19) (*n. ed.*).

10 *Gal.* 4:26.

11 *Heb.* 12:22–23.

This is not only a beautiful image, but also a reality, reality in the strong sense that the notion of citizenship-right used to have in the Ancient world, with all the political, religious, and juridical implications that it comported. St. Paul must have become aware of it, considering how well he knew to make use of his quality of Roman citizen. This quality could help him avoid local jurisdiction, so this *cives Romanus* could be sent to Rome. Likewise, our appurtenance to the heavenly city frees us ontologically from the dominion of the earthly city, from the world and its ties, in order to establish us under a different jurisdiction, in a different political body. Just as the right of Roman citizenship had the power to take Paul to Rome, our right to heavenly citizenship is not a title only, but, if we make use of it, if we understand all the consequences that it entails, it also has the power to make us truly reach the heavenly city. The certificate of debt that Christ canceled¹² is the document that made us the slaves of the city here, below, of demonic principalities and powers¹³ that He bound and exposed in His triumph,¹⁴ when He rose in glory, reopening Paradise to us, which had been closed after Adam was banned from it. Now, He did not reopen the earthly Paradise, but heaven itself and the city of angels.

The paradox of Christian life comes from the fact that he¹⁵ is truly dead and risen with Christ and “established in heaven in Christ Jesus,” but he still continues to live on this earth, in time, in this eon that he had already overpassed in order to live with Christ in the new eon. This is the paradox of the Church, which is, at the same time, in heaven and on earth. It is not about two Churches, one down here, and another one in heaven, or an actual one,

12 *Col.* 2:14.

13 *Ibid.*, 2:15.

14 *Ibid.*, 2:15.

15 A Christian (*n.ed.*).

on earth, and a future one, in heaven, but only one Church, "the Jerusalem above... which is the mother of us all."¹⁶ However, it is still on earth, in its limbs, that is in us. This is the paradox that is properly called sacrament or mystery, in which realities from the other age, from eternity, are revealed and communicated through created things, are made present in temporal acts, and take sensible form. This is the great mystery of divine, eternal Logos, who descends into time and is united with our humanity in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He appears among us—it is the mystery of the liturgy, in which the saving act of Christ becomes yet again present. Time and again liturgy the eternal erupts in time, time becomes transparent for the supra-temporal reality and conveys it. In fact, this is how all mysteries are: eternal things are united with the temporal, the uncreated with the created. A Christian is "moved into heaven," but not in passing, subjective ecstasy, but in his very being. And yet, at the same time, he continues to live on earth. As long as he does not undergo bodily death,¹⁷ he is in danger of losing his citizenship rights, of being excluded from the city of angels, and of condemning himself to "outer darkness,"¹⁸ to the companionship of demons.

During the first centuries of the Church, especially during the times of heightened, ever looming persecution, to become a Christian meant indeed to leave the earthly

16 *Gal.* 4:26 (*n. ed.*).

17 The ontological function of death is this: it seals the acquisitions of freedom, it finalizes the fruit of the dynamic effort, which it transmutes in stability. From here, we have death and asceticism: the successive deaths of the ascetic itinerary have the purpose to fix the ascending being into the new stage, which is detached from the previous stage. (In Scrima's text, this note appears as a parenthesis within the text).

18 *Mt.* 8:12.

city, to be placed at the margin of the city, and to risk losing at least your earthly citizenship, your place in society and in the city. In order to enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, you had to leave the earthly city. By persecuting the Christians, who were nonetheless fulfilling scrupulously their duties as citizens, the ancient pagan state, which had been constituted by the successive aggregation of cities—which meant, first, the gathering of the gods in one place—proved to have a sure instinct, the same that made the Athenian *polis* condemn Socrates. (In Daniel, the “god of fortresses”¹⁹ is mentioned, who is directly and absolutely the opposite of the living and transcendent God. It is the embodiment of worshiping the telluric, the immanent, the eternal spirit of Babel, the great and powerful city, which will not disappear completely before the end, when it will be thrown into the unceasing fire by the angels, the residents of the city above. This is important for a historiosophic typology of the city, of the human community, from *civitas* to burg.) However, if Socrates destroys the city by his intellectual individualism, Christians come out of it in order to belong to a different one. Doing so, they cancel the essential foundation of the city, or of the empire that inherits it, foundation that is of a religious order. Although [Emperor] Constantine had the intention to make Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire, he was surpassed by realities. If Christian religion transcends all races, nations, and languages,²⁰ then it also transcends the Roman Empire itself. The ancient state dies in this moment because it loses its religious foundation, while Christianity cannot be the religious foundation of a state in the way in which the pagan gods were the basis of the *polis*.

The profound reason for the persecutions is precisely the impossibility for a Christian to be integrated religious-

19 Dan. 11:38 (n. ed.).

20 Rev. 5:2–10.

ly in the city. The decisive moment in Pilate's interrogation of Jesus is: "My Kingdom is not of this world."²¹ He says this to Pilate, thus also to the Roman Empire, and at this moment the two kingdoms are face to face, as they will always be henceforth: the heavenly city and the earthly city; Christ's Kingdom, which is not of this world, and the Roman Empire. When the Roman Empire gives Christians to the beasts, it does what Pilate did when he gave Jesus to the multitude. The earthly city persecutes Christians precisely because they belong to another city. Christianity does not represent the culmination of religious and political individualism; it is not because a Christian searches a "personal," "direct" relationship with God that he makes the frames of the city fall, but rather because he is a member of another city; he is not free from the world and he does not oppose the world as an individual, in the name of the "freedom of conscience." He is not a representative of the individualism that denies the city, as in Socrates' case, but rather of another city, opposed to the earthly one. (The modern man, being obsessed with the problem of the "freedom of conscience," understands this other city superficially and externally; he does not have the intuition of its profound meanings. In fact, he searches the "freedom of conscience" not in order to save himself ontologically from the world, but rather to dispose individually and arbitrarily of it, which means, after all, to sink deeper into the world, becoming its slave.)

Until Constantine, the earthly city took it upon itself to show to Christians, if they had not yet understood, that their dwelling was in another place (for the ancients, man could not be imagined without a city). However, the situation is changed when persecutions stop. From that moment, the practical impossibility for a Christian to belong to the heavenly city and the earthly city at the same time

21 *Jn.* 18:36.

disappears. To be a Christian, one no longer needs to sacrifice one's goods, situation, family, and life. The Emperor himself is or will be a Christian. This is not the place to consider the consequences of this change for the Church; without a doubt, this is the most critical moment of her history, in which she evinced, for who knows to see, her radical transcendence. In circumstances such as this one, a human institution would have been essentially altered. The Church remains faithful to herself and to Christ, but her external living conditions take a completely different aspect. The afflux of neophytes, about whom the least that can be said is that they would not have become Christians if they had to break away from the earthly city, makes the antithesis between the two cities—the one of men and the one of angels—less conspicuous, and even makes some forget it. However, this antithesis does not subsist less, in all its vigor.

Monasticism appears in this moment to embody this antithesis and to affirm the essential incompatibility between the two cities. The monks—it has already been said—used to go into wilderness to search a heroism that ordinary Christian life no longer contained. Once the bloody persecution ended, the possibility to obtain the crown of martyrdom ended with them. Still, the monks want to obtain the honor and the reward of martyrdom through a rigorous asceticism, by penances that are at times inhuman. They want to bring witness to Christ by voluntary trials and sufferings.

The “average” moral level of Christians has decreased, after all, the desire for moral perfection. The thirst for heroism no longer found the occasion for satisfaction in the Church, and the interest in salvation no longer seemed to be obtainable here. Both these things may have pushed certain Christians to differentiate themselves from others.

But this means to profoundly ignore the essence of monasticism. It should not be searched in the moral order, nor in the individual preoccupation with salvation,

but rather in what may be called the ontological order. That which exists at least in germ in any baptized individual has obtained such a development in a monk that this new being is expressed and manifested also externally. The incompatibility of the two cities, the abandonment of the earthly city and the entrance in the heavenly one used to mean martyrdom, which is only the ultimate consequence, the complete flourishing of baptism; now, this becomes the entrance in the monastic state. It is therefore true that monasticism continues the Church of the martyrs. A martyr used to anticipate the *Parousia*, to take the Kingdom of God by force."²¹ He entered in the new eon. Stephen, the first martyr, and also the others already saw what can be seen only at the end of times: "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"²² This is the true testimony. Similarly, the monk sees the heavens opened and Christ amidst the angels. He knows that Christ reopened Paradise and has made him a citizen of the city of angels. This is why, anticipating the *Parousia*, he enters this city and can no longer live in a merely human city. The old Fathers used to call monastic life **Βίος ἀγγελικῶς**—and the Church of the East still calls it this way to this very day. We must not see in this expression a moral ideal of pureness, of perfection; it essentially expresses a fact: the monks are fellow citizens with the angels.

This familiarity of the monks of old with the angels is illustrated by many examples that our modern rationalists would consider puerile or moving at best.

And yet, the ties with the angels and belonging to their city attract also less pleasant relations with the demons. The demon, an angel fallen because of its pride, is jealous knowing that men are destined to fulfill in heaven the emptiness left there by the demon's and its partisans'

22 *Acts* 7:56.

fall. Considering that the demon has tempted Adam to make him share in his fate, that he has tempted Christ, the second Adam, the demon's spite does not fail exercising itself on those who are the fellow citizens of the angels, those who, although only humans, possess those rights which the demons have lost (they who, as angels, are superior to man by nature). This is why they are furious against the monks right from the start, and the fight against demons, which has so much importance in the life of hermits, is only the other facet of their belonging to the city of angels. This is an element that one will always find in monasticism. It is not a medieval superstition or the product of an overwrought imagination; it is rather a far from romantic reality. As long as there are monks, they will fight against demons, even if this can take very varied forms, according to the eras.

This is because the devil still has some power over a monk.

The monks are fellow citizens with the angels, but they are not angels. They are humans; irony is not merciful with those who pretend that they have become angels. They know very well that man is "not an angel, nor a beast" and that "whoever wants to play the angel will end up playing the beast."²³ They are humans and they still live on this earth, even if they anticipated the age to come. As humans, they are exposed to the danger of losing this inheritance, this right of citizenship for which they abandoned all their rights in the city of men. The devil knows this, and he throws everything into this play to make them fall. Thus, the life of a monk is a long fight against the devil, but we must notice that the monk is attacked in his quality of citizen of the city of angels. As a consequence, his salvation appears to him more menaced, more disputed than the one of the other Christians. "Shall I be

23 Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Lafuma, fr. 678, ed. Sellier, fr. 557 (*n. ed.*).

saved?" "Shall I live to attain salvation?" These questions return without ceasing in the monks' conversations with the Fathers of the desert. And yet, if the preoccupation with "salvation" plays a great role with them, this is not because they have come into the desert out of an egoistical desire for "personal" salvation, but rather because their salvation is strongly disputed. For them, who strive to fully accomplish their rights in the heavenly city, the loss of this right constitutes the single greatest catastrophe. "Shall I live to attain salvation?" This means: shall I be a citizen of this heavenly city in eternity, for whose sake I have abandoned everything even from here, below, or shall I rather lose my rights there? The higher you rise, the more terrible the fall would be. A monk is then still a man and, while he already lives in a new eon, in the Kingdom of Christ, he is still subjected to the human condition, as it results from sin. He is still covered with the garments of skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve before casting them out of Paradise.²⁴ Perhaps the very clothes of the old Fathers, the cloak made out of the skin of beasts, symbolize these garments of skin, this earthly human condition that is not denied by the monk. Instead, he is fully aware of it in order to overcome it, to transfigure it in Christ, by Christ's Pneuma.

For, the closer a human gets to the city of angels, the more acutely paradoxical a Christian's condition becomes in this life: he possesses the new life in Christ, the glory of the new era, in truth, but in a hidden, mysterious manner: *in mysterio*.

We will encounter here an aspect of monastic life: the crucifixion of the old man, about which St. Paul spoke, at the same time with the resurrection: repentance and mortification. However, this is illumined with a new meaning in the light of what we said above. This is where we en-

24 *Gen.* 3:21 (*n. ed.*).

counter that which strikes most those who consider monasticism from the outside: ascetic exertions (mortification) are at times inhuman, extraordinary, and they make some shiver and others smile. We cannot study here in great detail the role of mortification in Christian life and in the spiritual ascension, as the Greek Fathers conceive it, as for example Gregory of Nyssa. Ascesis aims to the dominion over passions, of bad inclinations, and, at the same time, that which, without being evil in itself, represents the tyranny of animal life. Doing so, one would arrive to *épāyeia*, perfect freedom in regard to irrational nature. To use the aforementioned expression, very dear to Gregory of Nyssa, ascesis is about the liberation from the “garments of skin” in order to be clothed with the aerial, spiritual, and pneumatic garments which are worn by the citizens of the other age. However, and this is already shown to us, a monk’s ascesis does not have the only purpose to tame nature, bad inclinations, and to annihilate vices. Ascesis continues even beyond a monk’s arrival at *ἀπάθεια* and so at *θεωρία*, at the contemplation of spiritual relations after the trials of ascesis, of **βλος πραχτικός**. A monk’s penitence has still another meaning: it is not only a means, but also a sign, the sign of his freedom in relation with the earthly life, the sign of his appurtenance to the new eon. If a monk fasts, if he diminishes his food, this is because “man shall not live by bread alone”²⁵; if he refrains from drinking, it is because he knows other springs of living waters than those of this earth;^{xli} if he diminishes his sleep, it is because he is a citizen of a city that has as light the glory of God,²⁶ which does not know sunset;^{xlii} if he refrains from sexual relations, it is because he already dwells with the angels, in the Kingdom where one neither marries nor is given in marriage.^{xliii} In the new eon, in the

25 *Lk.* 4:4.

26 *Rev.* 21:23.

heavenly city, we will not drink, nor eat, as we do here, below, to maintain our vital forces by material nourishment, because our life principle will no longer be an animal soul, but Christ's Pneuma, the very breath of God. This Pneuma is already our life principle, of us all who are dead and risen with Christ. On the Cross, Jesus gave up His spirit, he exhaled his pneuma, his material breath; yet, he entrusted his divine Pneuma to God: *in manus tuas commendo Spiritum meum*,²⁷ and God rose him by this Pneuma, so that the life principle of the humanity of the risen Christ may no longer be the material spirit, but the Pneuma of God. This is what allows St. Paul to say that "The Lord is the Spirit."²⁸ But we, who are regenerated *ex aqua et Spiritu*^{xliv}—*non ex aqua tantum, sed ex aqua et Spiritu*²⁹—we live as the risen Christ, *propter Deum*,^{xlv} so our true principle of life is no longer the material breath, but rather Christ's Pneuma. This is because our life is not maintained first by material nourishment. He, Christ, is our sustenance, our drink, and our vital spirit. This is where we find the lent's meaning: we are no longer indebted to the elements of the world. This is why fasting, watchfulness, and everything that is called repentance are indispensable elements of Christian life; it is clear that they will play a preponderant role in the life of a monk who has the conscience that he lives with Christ in the new eon. In the West, monks chant the following on Mondays, for the Lauds:^{xlvi}

*Christusque nobis sit cibus,
Potusque noster sit fides,*

27 "Into Your hands I commit My spirit" (*Lk.* 23:46). In Latin in original (*n. ed.*).

28 *2 Cor.* 3:17.

29 "From water and Spirit—not only from water, but from water and Spirit."

*Laeti bibamus sobriam
Ebrietatem Spiritus.*³⁰

If a monk refrains from many beautiful and good things, this does not mean that he despises what God created. On the contrary. The radical difference between the practices of abstinence in pagan religions, and even in Judaism, and the Christian, monastic penitence is found here. Especially in Judaism, fasting is a ritual of purification or a sign of sadness and mourning. However, even when it signifies the regret for a mistake, fasting never goes beyond the level of punishment that you apply to yourself to appease God's wrath, showing Him a sorrowful heart. The penitence of a Christian, especially in the case of monks, also contains this element of punishment for a mistake, of atonement for sin, of purification, but it is not only this; it is not even just a sign of the μετάνοια that St. John the Baptist required. This was indeed the highest sign of repentance before Christ: return, repent, and prepare the ways of the Lord.^{xlvii} This meaning for fasting still exists. However, when a Christian fasts, he does not do it only as a "sacrifice," to show to God his contrition, to try his will, to impose an asceticism to himself. He rather accomplishes the act of a citizen of the heavenly city, who thus shows that he "does not live by bread alone,"^{xlviii} but on some other sustenance than the earthly one. Monastic poorness gains here the fullness of its meaning. How could the citizens of the city of angels own something in the city of men? The right of property, of selling and buying, is among a citizen's rights, and a Christian legitimately exercises this right. He is only asked to not forget that these things are not final goods. But for the sake of the heavenly

30 "May Christ be our food, and faith be our drink, and let us drink joyfully the sober drunkenness of the Spirit." St. Ambrose, the hymn *Splendor paternae gloriae* (from Latin) (*n. ed.*).

city, the monk willingly gave up his rights in the earthly city, and he stays at the threshold of the new era, not taking anything with him, just as no one would take anything when leaving this life. Monastic poverty is formally founded on Christ's words: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, [...]^{xlix} and come, follow Me."³¹ But this still does not explain the essence of poverty. It is not enough to say that Jesus was poor, that he did not have anything on earth, not even where to lay his head.¹ This is not only an example of humility that he gives us.

In order to understand or get a glimpse of Christ's poverty and a monk's poverty, and, in general, the meaning of poverty in Christian life, let us first follow Jesus in the wilderness. The temptation of Jesus does not seem to say much to our contemporaries, who cannot conceive how Christ, being God, could have been truly tempted. This is because they have a too subjective idea about temptation and, without a doubt, a too abstract idea about Christ. It would be very simple if Christ could be reduced to concepts or to mathematical or to chemical formulas. However, if each human being remains a mystery for the others, the person of Jesus Christ remains that much more a mystery. In order to understand Jesus' temptation in its true perspective, we must remember that Christ is the "new Adam." Jesus' temptation is parallel with that of Adam, but it has an opposite direction. God had established Adam the master over all seen creation, but before being the head of the cosmos, Adam was its summary, having something in common with every created being. He did not possess things by a "natural right," but by the gift of God. Adam's sin was to turn from God toward himself—his sin was *avarice* at the beginning; wanting to master for himself and by himself the science of good and evil,

31 Mt. 19:21 (*n. ed.*).

no longer waiting for God to give him this science, wanting instead to reach all by himself that which he was supposed to receive only from God, he broke the living tie that was binding him to God, and, at the same moment, he lost the mastery over things, which he only had from God. When he was united and submitted to God, he used to have everything—as the Father of the prodigal son says to the son who had never left him: “you are always with Me, and all that is mine is yours.”^{32li} It was the same with Adam; he too was supposed to receive his entire inheritance on the day decided by God. However, the prodigal son wants to have his part of the inheritance for himself—for him alone; and soon, he no longer has anything. Thus, in Adam, humanity wonders far from the Father in a hostile world. On the other hand, Christ, the new Adam, who bears within himself, just like Adam, the entire humanity, comes in order to walk Adam’s path but in the opposite direction. At his descent into the world, he goes straight to the situation that is the farthest from the glory and wealth that he, the Logos, possesses by right: to nakedness and to the manger. Here also, in the wilderness, as it was once in Paradise, behold the tempter: the same one. Everything that the tempter proposes to him is, of course, in Christ’s power to realize, but he travels Adam’s path in the opposite direction: Adam tries to put his name on what he had to receive only from God. Christ refuses to make use for himself of a power that is his own by nature, unbinding and voiding, so to say, Adam’s contract. Now, the second temptation is particularly significant for our problem. The devil offers him all the kingdoms of the earth, all their power and glory. Leaving aside the condition, “if You will worship before me,”³³ to which, of course, Jesus does not consent, Christ cannot accept any property on this earth.

32 *Lk.* 15:31 (*n. ed.*).

33 *Mt.* 4:9, *Lk.* 4:7 (*n. ed.*).

In reality, everything is his, because everything was created in him, the Logos, and everything that the Father has is his, not by grace, but by nature. Even in his humanity, he is fully Κύριος, the Lord of all, because of the union between his humanity with the Logos. However, he owns everything in a different way, infinitely more perfect than the way in which humans own, whose property is always menaced, transitory, limited in various ways to the period of their own lives. If Christ consented to own something of this creation in the way humans do, regardless of what that would be, he would lose his rights of Master of the entire creation. It is an unreal supposition. One may say that if Christ does not possess anything, absolutely anything, on this earth, this is because he possesses everything in a different mode. He cannot have anything for himself, contrary to the children of Adam who “possess” things for themselves, repeating the gesture of concupiscence, of greed, of their proto-father, following a mode of possession that is conditioned by sin even if it is not intrinsically sinful: personal property is part of an entire ensemble of life conditions that, without being sins themselves, would not have existed without sin. Property is part of this ensemble, as the necessity to be nourished or as sexuality, for example. Thus, after Jesus refused nourishment, property, as he had refused to use his power for his own self, we see the heavenly city open up for a moment: behold the heavenly Master surrounded by the angels that worship Him.³⁴

Being risen with Christ, a monk has entered with him the city of angels. Just like Christ, with Christ in him, as master of the entire creation, such a monk has recovered Adam's rights over the cosmos and participates in Christ's sovereignty over the creation; however, precisely because

34 *Mt.* 4:11: “Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

of this, a monk can no longer exercise a property right in the manner of the Adamites.

It was often said that the return to Heaven is one of the great monastic themes; however, this does not mean a simple return to Adam's condition. More than a comeback to the Garden of Eden, this is the entrance in the new eon, in Christ's kingdom, where all things are restored and where the order destroyed by Adam's sin is finally reestablished. It is not only restoration, but also fulfillment, perfection. As a microcosm, Adam was the head of creation, but he was rather a vice-king than a king. The one who was destined to be the true head of the entire material and spiritual creation, so also of the angels, was Christ, Christ the Κύριος, in his humanity united with the Logos and vivified by the Spirit, in which Adam himself finds his fulfillment. Indeed, human nature, the nature of a monk, is thus deified in Christ. A monk does not return; on the contrary, he anticipates the coming of Christ's Kingdom, the new eon. This is why the wild beasts are submissive to him and serve him. He carries within himself the new eon, and this determines all of his relations with the cosmos. (The integration of the "intelligible eon" is given in the profound possibilities of being; integration becomes an anthropological category, a constitutive element of the new spiritual structure of man: personal transfiguration and the medium's transfiguration are operated precisely by the irradiation of this eonic nucleus that is present in the ineffable center of being. Transfiguration is a problem of changing the "countenance,"^{lii} of its reverberation by the unveiling of interiority which is different than the "natural" one, the ordinary one, the one which is limited to the present eon.)

The poverty of a monk makes him have the outward appearance of the most destitute of all the humans. And yet, his poverty is connected to true wealth, which should not be understood, as we saw, merely as possession of purely spiritual goods, but also as a form of participation into Christ's sovereignty over the sensible cosmos. *Centu-*

plum accipietis.^{35liii} These are things of the same nature with those we have left behind, but they are given to us even in this life a hundred times fold, not only quantitatively—the entire cosmos—but also in the way in which this cosmos belongs to us. On the day you give up your property rights in the earthly kingdom, you must know the new beauty in which all things appear from the blue line of the mountains at the horizon, the play of lights and shadows on the slope of the forest to the hair of grass in the garden, the little fly standing on your hand, and this small pink stone with delicate lines. One could say that the entire creation thanks us because, by our passing into the heavenly city, we announce unto her the coming of the new age so its imminent liberation.

At the same time, a monk rediscovers the vision of the cosmos that opens towards him and in which he enters because he had reestablished his relationship with it. Thus, St. Benedict saw the entire world as if gathered in a sunbeam, and St. Hildegard saw the relations between things and that which was hidden to others, the past and the future. We are to understand her science about herbs and plants in the same way. The plants, as the entire creation, were expected to serve man and thus to contribute to the glory of God.

We can still go deeper in poverty and, in general, in monastic penitence. The paradox or rather the mystery that we find in its inmost depth is no other than the Cross. We have spoken of Resurrection and Ascension, of the glory of the new eon. It is the Cross of Christ which gives us this glory, to Him and to us, and to us in Him. Θέωσις is inseparable from the mystery of kenosis. On this earth,

35 “He shall receive a hundredfold” (*in Latin*). See Mt. 19:29: “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.” (*n. ed.*)

those who participate more intensely to Θέωσις, to the deification of human nature, are also those who participate most deeply to kenosis and to its most scandalous expression, the Cross. More than understanding, we see that this must be so. It is the Cross that opens the sealed gate, the gate of the city of angels. On Palm Sunday, we knock at the gate of the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem in which *Hosanna* resounds, with the wood of the Cross, and this gate opens only before the Cross. If we want to have the entire perspective of the life of a monk, let us read together the passage from St. Paul³⁶ that is read in the Roman Church this very week of Palm Sunday. This passage serves as the prelude of the Holy Week and indicates its themes. “Christ... humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” His descent takes shapes and becomes impending—it is not only *servus*, *homo*—but we go even below man: *humiliavit* [...] *mors*—and still, this is not the lowest step; the supreme annihilation is *mors crucis*. This is the bottom of the chasm; one cannot go lower. Hither also, when the bottom has been reached, the ascending movement begins, gushes forth. This is, truly, the origination of glory. “Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him.”³⁷ This is the final triumph, and these accents of victory accompany us the entire Holy Week: in the Cross, the glory; in supreme *kenosis*, Θέωσις. The spring of a monk’s humility and obedience is found here. We also find here the spring of the descending and ascending movement that is so characteristic to monastic spirituality. We find it in the writings of St. John of the Ladder, but also in John Cassian, and in the Father of Western monks, St. Benedict.

A monk’s humility or meekness is not a “moral” virtue; it is the participation in Christ’s kenosis, in the cross

36 *Phil.* 2:5–11.

37 *Phil.* 2:5–11.

without which there is no Θέωσις. Similarly, obedience has its root in *factus oboediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis*.^{38liv} (The Christ-experience is the original, omnicomprehensive fact of the Christian work of salvation; outside this fact, there is nothing to be found because it exhausted the itinerary of deification. A monk does not “imitate” Christ, but he rather enacts an exemplarity that he incarnates, that he assumes to the point of it becoming his own way of life which, it is true, has its origin, justification, and eternal substantiation in Christ. He does not “imitate” Christ, but he integrates in Him.)

Death and resurrection. Death is defeated by and in the very death. Our “ascension” is given to us in humility^{lv}; the Cross opens to us also the gate of heaven (not only the ethical, “passionate” cross, but also the contemplative, theoretical Cross). Deification, Θέωσις, is not the end of an intellectual, “gnostic” ascension; it is rather the real participation of the entire being to the glory of Christ. And yet, the one who rejoices in heaven with the angels is at the same time on earth, and here he participates in the Cross of Christ. A monk lives simultaneously in two worlds: the world of the angels, where he has the glory of Christ; and the earthly world, where his part is also that of Christ, the Cross. He drinks Christ’s cup, as Jesus promised to the sons of Zebedee: he drinks it on earth, and this is the cross, and he drinks it at the same time—it is the same cup—in heaven, and there he drinks the life of the new eon.

We do not pretend to have offered a complete study of the essence of monasticism; we only tried to shed light on one of its essential aspects and thus to situate some features of monastic life in this perspective. Without a doubt, there are other aspects and other points of view. However,

38 *Phil.* 2:8, “X” in Latin (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

what can be said is that all elements of monasticism are already found in the entire Christian life, being given in baptism. All Christians have the right of citizenship in the city of angels, but not all already exercise it plenary in this era. Instead, a monk has already chosen between the two cities, and he is a citizen in the city above inasmuch as he has abandoned all of his rights, even the legitimate ones, in the city below.

Ever since the majority of the members of the Church are also members of the earthly city and exercise, legitimately, of course, their citizenship rights in it, we consider that the function of monasticism in the Church is this: to affirm a Christian's belonging to the city of angels, to affirm his rights there while still here, and to apply them. As long as the Church is on earth in her members, the monks, who continue without ceasing to belong to the Church are already members of the city of angels, have the task to maintain the Church open toward the city of angels, to maintain her in communication with the Church of heaven and with the new eon. To believe that monks run away from the Church of the faithful because she no longer satisfies their aspirations for perfection or heroism means to not understand anything about monasticism. No, the monks don't even consider leaving the Church. Other than in some exceptional cases, hermits go to the closest church on Sunday to participate in the Holy Liturgy; later, the colonies of hermits, the cenobies, have their own church, and the bishop announces the day of Pascha every year to the monks in his eparchy. Even the West has not forgotten that monks are especially charged with the Liturgy, with the glorification of God. (There is a relation between knowledge and doxology: the angels know or, better said, recognize^{lvi} God's reasons in things in a profound, doxological way, in an activity of glorifying the Creator. Knowledge and praise-giving coincide. Thus, angelic, doxological knowledge is no longer lapsarian knowledge: the glorifying element transfigures it into a communitary act, beyond an individual perspective, self-

centered love, and all other negative and limitative implications of "natural" knowledge. Glorification and praise-giving are always a coming out of oneself, out of the narrow frame of the ego. It is an acknowledgement of the majesty and the glory of the Other which compels also love's acquiescence. We discover here the directions of monastic gnoseology.) But we no longer realize that an ontological reason is perhaps hidden here. The entire Church and each faithful praise God, magnify Him, and bring praises to Him.

And yet the monks' praise has a special quality because they provide it in their quality of citizens of the heavenly city. This worship is described in Book of *Revelation*.³⁹ One of the distinctive features of the liturgy of the heavenly city, to which the monastics participate, is that it takes place unceasingly, "day and night."⁴⁰ While the faithful can only participate in worship on certain days, at certain hours, monks represent the Church in the heavenly worship. Even though the circumstances of their earthly life do not allow them to celebrate the liturgy without ceasing, they at least celebrate it like the angels, "day and night." The midnight offices and the hours^{lvii} are an indispensable part of monastic services. If a monk's entire life is already a participation to the life of the heavenly city, this is especially true for the liturgy that he accomplishes: *Ubique credimus divinam esse praesentiam*⁴¹ and *oculos Domini in omni loco speculari bonos et malos*⁴²... *Regula St. Benedicti*, cap. XIX, *De disciplina psallendi*.^{lviii}

39 *Rev.* 4:6.

40 *Rev.* 4:8.

41 "We consider that divine presence is everywhere."

42 "The eyes of the Lord observe those who are good and those who are the bad in any place." See also *Prov.* 14:3 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

Monasticism will then always maintain its function in the Church. This function is not connected with any specific necessity that appeared in a determined era of the history of the Church and is not susceptible to disappear or to be transformed; the monks will have their role in the life of the Church as long as she will exist on earth. This role is to maintain open the gate of communication between heaven and earth, the gate by which the angels enter and exit, by which the Church assists and participates to the liturgy and to the life of the heavenly city.

II. ARGUMENT FOR A MEDITATION ON THE VOW OF VIRGINITY

From the three vows of a monk, the vow of chastity distinguishes a monk most strikingly from the rest of the people in the eyes and the opinion of the world. This is the assurance of arriving to complete solitude^{lix} and the sign of directing life on other than ordinary paths. At the same time, it is a stumbling stone for the overly zealous and the superficial defenders of "natural life."

Monastic vows are destined to bring God in man.

They must be lived in the light of this meaning, and not as formal behaviors, external to being. A vow unto God is an act, a work by which you promise that from now on you would live your life deeper in God beginning with that moment, even to the point of filling yourself with Him. Thus, scrutinized with a more serious and more comprehending eye, monastic vows do not contradict the nature of man, but rather are aligned on the path of the customary works of self-accomplishment. We will then discover virginity as a category that is permanently present in the life of man in general and perfectly normal for the life of a monk.

Briefly, virginity means integrity: it maintains the complete being, with all of its powers and functions directed toward the work of self-accomplishment. In this sense, one could say that man has the vocation of abstinence by nature because it is natural for man to tend to be more of a man, more truly himself, so a spiritual being—and it was only the accident of sin that estranged him from the right path, taking him to self-scattering and finally death.

Thus, even marriage, when considered in its deepest meaning, does not contradict abstinence, but it rather confirms and strengthens it.

As it has been established as mystery, marriage has precisely the role to conquer the consequences of sin in the bodily order and to ensure, in a certain way, the cleanliness, the temperance, and so the virginity of man by re-

making the integrity of being, as we said above. All this because—and “this is a great mystery”—man and woman are meant to make one body in marriage, as in the original state of mankind, having Christ as their head, as He also is Head of the Church. This is why, one more time, this is a great mystery.

Let us inquire deeper: what is the meaning—the role, the ultimate purpose—of refashioning the integrity of being, so of living in the abstinence and virginity to which the monk has committed himself? The answer is short, but great: Resurrection.

In sin, birth and death are strongly bound to one another.

The one who is born is destined to death: in an odd and tragic way, life used to be destined to feed death. Birth, so the very act of giving life, also plants the seed of death in man, and this seed grows day after day and hour after hour, mixed in our blood, in the beating of the heart, the pulsation of arteries, the growth of cells. It is thus interwoven with everything that constitutes, at the same time, the basis of life. Nourished especially with our passions, with man's passions, death grows more and more within life until it chokes this life and throws man in the second death. However, the work of salvation of the God-Man Jesus Christ annihilated the power of death for good and gave to man the foundations of eternal life, which he can make his own by his free will. This is the role of abstinence: by it, we murder death in us, not life. The refashioning of the unity and integrity of being means the refashioning of the foundations of life, which can no longer be menaced by any death damaging effect of death and annihilation. The monk is by definition a unitary creature; even his name, “*monos*”—one alone—shows this. He is destined to simple life in the integrity of his being, similar to the angels who are simple creatures who do not suffer the scattering of their lives by their living in bodily appetite.

The name attributed to a monk, an “angel in a body,” is not a figure of speech; it actually expresses in the most accurate way the deep content of spiritual life, which is the growth of man to the measure of the angel, of the being of the future era. For this purpose, the overcoming of man’s brokenness brought by sexual life, which is a source of life but also of death, appears as the first step to take. As St. John of the Ladder says, “purity makes us friends with God and, as much as it is possible, makes us like Him.”^{lx} In chapter 14 of the Book of Revelation, we read how those who follow Christ “wherever He would go”—and this means the tight connection and complete likeness to God, the perfect communion with Him—are the virginal ones “who were not defiled with women.”⁴³ Man’s return toward himself by abstinence is crowned with obtaining simplicity through which we draw near to God the Simple One.

But what are the practical grounds on which we seal the promise of abstinence within us? Without a doubt, what is first needed is the fight against bodily sin and the departure from anything that could occasion it. “The mother of purity is the appeasement attained in the life of observance,” St. John of the Ladder says. Thus, the environment and the fellowships in which you spend your life are of great value for ensuring the material basis of abstinence. We must flee from anything that may remind us of sin. These are the toil and struggle of man’s outward being, and they cannot be avoided. But, as we said above, this is only a ground for abstinence, and not the entire, true, and deep spiritual abstinence. Those advanced in the life of the Spirit experienced this; St. Basil, for example, says, “I have not known woman, but I am not a virgin”; St. John of the Ladder says, “whoever wants to appease the assault of the passions by bodily abstinence only

43 *Rev.* 14:4 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

is similar to a man who wants to escape the vortices of the deep by swimming with only one hand"; a thinker of our days also wrote: "Chastity, that is bodily abstinence, is not a virtue, but only a step toward it."^{lxi}

The true and spiritually valuable ground for abstinence dwells deeper. A monk is called to constitute only one body with Christ, to adhere to Him, to search for the complete union with the Lord, just as the bride from the *Song of Songs*, who is an image of our own soul, yearns for the union with her Lover, the most beautiful of the sons of men. Abstinence is possible because of the spiritual wedding of the soul with God. Just as the wedding between man and woman is meant to ensure the purity of the life of common people, the marriage of a pure, simple soul, the marriage of a monk with Christ seals in him the vow of virginity even more strongly. The so very practical and concrete path toward this is the pure prayer of the Spirit, for "the one who joins oneself to God is one Spirit with Him."^{lxii} In the order of monasticism and in the ecclesiastic books, virginity is described as the "entire wisdom," so the deep unity of the mind. St. John of the Ladder:

1. "Pure is the one who replaces bodily love with divine love, and who extinguished fire with the nonmaterial one."

2. "The entire wisdom is an all-encompassing title for all the virtues."

3. "The entire wisdom is the purity of the soul and body."

We encounter here again the meaning of the inward integrity of virginity. A monk becomes complete by the interior union of the mind with the heart, the two centers that have been divided by sin, but reunited by the unceasing perseverance in the Jesus prayer,^{lxiii} which is described in the tradition of the Fathers, not without reason, as the strongest support of spiritual life.

Thus, as man is united within himself in inner work and united to God by the same work of prayer, abstinence returns man to his Creator, renders the gift of life to its

eternal Spring, stopping being from its sliding toward the death that is conveyed by the experience of worldly passions. In the most concrete fashion, abstinence crucifies you to the world, in the sense that it closes the door to the outside passions in order to open the inner door of the heart behind which Lord Jesus awaits and knocks.^{lxiv} The pure soul hears the knock of the Bridegroom and, according to the word of St. John the Evangelist, the Spirit and the Bride say: "Come!"^{lxv} The one who is united with the Lord is to be always with Him in eternity, to rest on His chest, just like His beloved disciple and image of virginity, St. John. And, still like him, one is to always have on one's lips and in one's heart the call of love: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"

Virginity is a problem of love: if we love Christ-life, we stay virginal; if we love the world, we collapse and die.

The monastic vows represent an enlisting, not a promise.^{lxvi} By them, you are integrated in a new ontological state that you must incarnate unceasingly, for which you must continually make space within you because it spans the process of replacing the old man with the new, death with life.

St. John of the Ladder: "The one who, while still in the body, obtained the honor of victory, died and rose again, and he knew even from here the beginning of the future incorruptibility."^{lxvii}

From an old Romanian Philokalia: "This is why we do not achieve perfection and are deprived of the gift, because we do not know where to begin spiritual life; we do not know its middle, nor its end, nor the connection and strengthening of good deeds. Until then, we toil with no avail.

"Good bodily deeds are the beginning of the spiritual path. The inner watchfulness of the mind and the heart and their good work is the guidance of the soul; and they are the end of the spiritual path. For the toils of the body without inner watchfulness falls as dry leaves."^{lxviii}

Integrity and inner unity are the conditions of man's majesty: they raise him up to the supreme stature of Christ.

Hesychius of Sinai: "The one who gave up goods, such as woman, money, and the like, has made the outer man a monk, but not yet the inner man. But the one who also gave up the passionate meanings of these goods has made a monk out of the inner man, which is the mind. It is easy to make the outer man a monk, as long as he wants it; but much fight is required to make the inner man a monk."⁴⁴

44 *Philokalia*, IV, p. 59.

III. THE SPIRITUAL FATHER AND HIS DISCIPLE⁴⁵

1. The General Framework of the Problem

The relationship between the spiritual father and the disciple in Eastern spirituality. Monastic life is considered within a living, personal unfolding, as a partaking^{lxix} of spirit from a spirit. Thus, Eastern monasticism always lived under the sign of the elder's spiritual personality, not of the rule, which had become a system of abstract and impersonal principles. This suits particularly well the special condition of the novice, of the disciple, who comes toward spiritual life in a state of enthusiasm, with his soul inflamed, and he needs to be received by a living presence, by some paternal arms that would seal forever this saintly inflammation in his heart, which St. Isaac the Syrian calls "the beginning—the golden pin of the soul."^{lxx}

2. The Meaning and the Unfolding of the Spiritual Father-Disciple Relationship

This spiritual jointing has first in view an "initiation." You enter spiritual life as an experience that you must incarnate, make yours inwardly. For this, you need to be guided on its paths by one who has been tried already, who

45 There is a second title in the manuscript, on the following page: *The Spiritual Guide and the Disciple in the Writings of the Ancient Church Fathers*. These are notes for a conference (perhaps in the Antim Monastery) or an ampler work. As it is known, A. Scrima did not abandon the project. He gave a "classical" version to it in the collective volume *Hermes, 3, Le Maître spirituel selon les traditions d'Occident et d'Orient*, Paris, 1983, second modified edition; the Romanian version, translated by Anca Manolescu, was published in *Timpul Rugului Aprins (The Time of the Burning Bush—translator's note)*, Humanitas, second revised edition, 2000, p. 167–188 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

could reveal to you the meanings of the new world that you enter step by step, moment after moment.

This thing is especially necessary because spiritual life must be assimilated consciously; it must be the expression of the spirit's maxim lucidity. Monastic empiricism is not acceptable; it leads to routine, conformism, spiritual insensitivity, and obduracy. This is why St. Symeon the New Theologian does not want to recognize as Christians those who are not conscientious of the work of the Holy Spirit in them.

Initiation—the mystagogy of the conscience of the spirit—actually has the meaning of a second birth. A spiritual man cannot be built on the outside; he is born inwardly, not from bodily desire, but from God.

This is the mystery of our inner being called personality: the every day death of the old man and the every day birth of the new man. The spiritual confessor is the one who founds and leads the extremely delicate operation of the disciple's spiritual growth, his eternal renewal in the Lord. The confessor can say with the meekness that characterizes his state, "You are my son, today I have begotten you."^{lxxi} In this way, the joining between spiritual father and disciple perpetuates the precious race of a spiritual nation: the confessor does not transfer to the disciple flesh of his flesh, but of his and of God's spirit.

3. What Is a Spiritual Father to a Disciple? Pneumatic Characterology

A spiritual father is the man who assists and presides this unique miracle: the burgeoning of the personality, the birth of a new man out of an old one. Thus, he must be first of all a presence of love for the apprentice, the disciple's own conscience that is somehow still external to him. He must not overwhelm the apprentice with his weight, but rather give himself to him with a good will that would make the disciple understand the unique value of a spiritual father. A confessor must thus be a creator for every moment: he must always discover the appropriate and

propitious attitude for spiritually serving his son. He does not proceed with preconceived ideas, in the form of rigid systems, because this would lead to the annihilation of the personality of the disciple, and not to its flourishing. Orthodoxy has never known *perinde ac cadaver*,⁴⁶ the transformation of a disciple in a blind instrument of a foreign will, but it rather always looked for the awakening of his personal, deep, and authentic will, which is Christ's will in us. For in this resides a spiritual father's mastery—in a plenary sense, his art. He must be supple and firm at the same time, powerfully present and also effaced, as if he did not exist, in order to model the wonderful growth of the personality of the disciple who is next to him.

What does a spiritual father teach a disciple? The holy watchfulness of inner life, first of all, and then its fruit-bearing in the smallest details of his life. Thus, the teaching of a spiritual father will include the catechesis of the life of mystery and of the external life, determined even to the last detail of propriety.

How should a disciple behave toward a spiritual father? The problem of a disciple is that of openness. Without a good disposition to allow himself to be penetrated and fashioned by the work of his spiritual father, a disciple enters a grave danger, that of refusal, of voluntary and obstinate obstacle, which leads to spiritual sterility. This is why a disciple's fundamental virtues are his love and trust in his spiritual father. It is in this interior framework that a disciple arrives, on the one hand, to true self-knowledge

46 "Just as a cadaver" (Latin). St. Ignatius of Loyola summarizes the discipline of his Company in this way, understanding by it that the Jesuits must obey blindly the will of their superiors, opposing less resistance than a cadaver. The submission was not, however, absolute. St. Ignatius added: *in omnibus ubi peccatum non cerneretur*, "in all things in which one cannot discern a sin" (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

and, on the other hand, to be filled by the living spirit of his guide, who will raise him up to the stage of spiritual fulfillment.

The elder—the spiritual guide—is an old monk of a venerable, august old age, who is a watchful guardian of the best monastic traditions, a man instructed by a long experience, and a profound knower of the methods of prayer and contemplation. He is the director of conscience of the other monks, especially the novices.

They are entrusted to an elder immediately after their arrival in the monastery. The old man will first teach them meekness and self-denial. A disciple must learn from his spiritual father the perfect withdrawal from the world and its cravings, shunning of passions, renewal of the mind, and loneliness in contemplation and in unceasing prayer. He will thus appropriate the entire great spiritual dowry that has been gathered since the beginning of Christian life and unceasingly increased during the centuries of mystical spiritual fruitfulness of the Fathers of old. Since the elder is the one who transmits them vividly and powerfully, from heart to heart, his image is slowly assimilated with the devout image of the great Fathers of old and, for the disciple, becomes one with the ancient icon of those who incarnated the fullness of spiritual perfection: Anthony the Great, Pachomius, Euthimius, Macarius, Ilarion, Basil, John of the Ladder, Barsanuphius and John, Dorotheus, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory from Sinai, and others, known or unknown, until our days.

We discover here the inestimable sense and worth of the elder: he brings among us, in our lives, in all the times and the places of this world, regardless of how dry, cold, and hardened it may be, the eternal real presence of the holy man, of the complete follower of Christ.

A spiritual father overcomes time and its baleful effect; just as Joshua of Navi, who stopped the visible sun in its course, he maintains within this world the warmth and immaterial light of the spiritual sun. The imperishable spiritual past immerses into the present by him. In the

proximity of his father, a disciple lives the preeminently pneumatic miracle of the removal of history, of the coming out of time, in order to enter in the communion of the saints, in their supra-temporal eon. For this, a disciple must discover the price of joy in his spiritual life. He must especially run from the demon of sorrow because this is now the summative form of all hindrances, predicaments, and temptations that oppose his spiritual ascent. Sorrow is representative for all "earthly spirit," for all ties that pull down the soul of a disciple toward the life of the sensible world and the renunciation of the heavenly one.

This sorrow must be dislocated from the joy of glimpsing the world beyond: "Rejoice, and I will say again, rejoice!"^{lxxii} The spirit of sorrow calls in you the deceptive peace of nothingness, the longing for melting in the passivity of a life without effort and without problems, without responsibility and personality, drowned into the impersonal flux of natural becoming. The spirit of joy is the spirit of adoption that shouts in us, "Abba, Father!"^{lxxiii} It utters the joy of recovering the Father through this father here, the reenrance in the dimensions of personal dignity, of heavenly glory already obtained here as part of the inheritance. If you discovered the love of your spiritual father, you also discovered the ultimate grounds of joy.

The image of an accomplished^{lxxiv} *monk*: we can consider him by his interiority but also outwardly, in his manifestation—but especially in the unity of these two. It is precisely in that he is a unity of spirit and action (and so it is not hypocrisy or helpless pseudo-holiness) that we have the sign and the proof of the presence of an "accomplished" one.

IV. THOUGHTS BEFORE AN ICON

There are two very widespread points of view about icons. The first ignores or completely denies the sacred meaning of an icon and only considers it to be one of the various manifestations of man's creative faculty, a manifestation that is in no way distinguished from other forms of art and that is important only as "cultural value." This point of view is widespread especially among estheticians, art historians, and archeologists. On first sight, it has nothing in common with the spiritual meaning of an icon; however, as we will further see, it has a capital importance in the role that an icon plays in our era, precisely in its capacity of sacred image.

The second point of view is proper to the observant faithful. They recognize the sacred meaning of an icon, its liturgical value; however, at the same time, they attribute the same significance to any image having a religious subject or bearing a religious name. The only difference they see between such an image and an icon is a difference of "style." For them, the first is an icon of "old style," the other is "an icon of modern style." One may say that, very often, an icon painted now but in the "old style" is considered as an attempt to return to an antiquated art.

The confusion between an icon and images that most often have very little, if at all, in common with an icon persists in the practice accepted by our churches during the last centuries. This state of affairs came to be during the era of secularization that appeared during the 17th century. The Church has never approved it. On the contrary, this practice was established against the ordinances of the Church. Indeed, secularization influenced not only the canonical organization of the Church, but also the sacred art and especially the icons and the chanting. Both in its iconography and its spiritual content, a sacred image suffered a catastrophic deformation that led to the almost total disappearance of the very art of an icon and of the faithful's understanding of it. Today, we forget too fast

that the teaching of the Church can be deformed by image just as well as it can be by word.

"If one of the pagans comes to you and says, show me your faith, you will take him to a church and place him before various sacred images" (St. John of Damascus, *Adv. Const. Cabal.*). These words of St. John of Damascus reveal the overall importance of an orthodox icon. One of the greatest Fathers of the Church, who wrote an exposition of the orthodox faith and provided the theological substantiation to icons during the iconoclast period, knew all too well what was meant by "explaining or 'showing' the orthodox faith."

The seventh Ecumenical Council gave a very piercing view of the perfect correspondence between image and word. It attributes to an icon the same significance that Holy Scripture has: "We keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions established for us, whether in writing or otherwise, one of which teaches us the making of iconographic representations, agreeable to the history of the preaching of the Gospel... Since one corresponds to the other, they prove each other undeniably."^{lxxv} In other words, an icon corresponds to the word not only because they explain each other, but also because one serves as proof for the other.

Just like the words of St. John of Damascus, this conciliar decision shows us that the Church does not see in an icon only an art serving to illustrate the Holy Scripture and, even less so, a simple ornament for churches. The Church considers an icon the equivalent of the Holy Scripture and attributes to it the same dogmatic, liturgical, and mystical value. Just as a divine service, an icon expresses and transmits the dogma of the Church to the faithful, that is the revealed truth, to which the Church gave a formula. This truth also enters in the life of the Christian people as a whole and in everyone's life separately and shows them the path to follow in life.

In the Church, any human activity, including artistic creation, is subjected and directed by the canon. The

Church, “a kingdom which is not of this world,” lives *in* the world and *for* the world, for its salvation. She has her own nature, distinct of the nature of the world, and serves the world precisely because she is different than it. Thus, the external manifestations of the Church, by which she realizes her saving mission in the world, so the word, the image, the chant, etc., all are distinct from the analogous manifestations within the profane realm. All of them bear a seal that distinguishes them, even externally, from everything that surrounds them. An icon, a chant, or a poem cease to be arts that follow their own paths, independent of one another, attempting particular effects; they become various forms that express, each in its field and its own way, one truth: the Church. This is why, just as the Holy Scripture distinguishes itself from profane literature, an icon, which witnesses revealed truth, distinguishes itself from any other form of visual art. Scripture and sacred image cannot be profane or semi-profane; the source that feeds them is no longer the reality of this world, but the divine grace of the Holy Spirit.

The specific character of the Church, of which they are manifestations, requires that Scripture and icon submit to its canon. The canon defines the books of the Holy Scripture and separates them from the apocryphal ones. It is still the canon that defines the authentic sacred image. In both cases, the Church separates the truth of her teaching from the multitude of human ideas or representations.

In other words, an image is a language by which the Church expresses her teaching. In fact, just as the word of the Holy Scripture is an image, image itself is a word (calligram). Beyond their direct signification, both of them place us in the presence of the divine world, of the age to come; both of them are a symbol of the Spirit that they reveal.

Just as in the God-Man Jesus Christ “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,”⁴⁷ the Church, the Body of Christ, divine and human organism at the same time, unites within herself inseparably and without confusion^{lxxvi} two realities: the historic, earthly reality, and the reality of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which sanctifies everything. The sacred art’s *raison d’être*, and especially an icon’s, rests in the fact that it transmits or, more precisely, attests to these two realities in a visible way. It is realist in two ways. Precisely because of this, the icon distinguishes itself from any other representation. Thus, in an icon of a saint, a “heavenly man and an terrestrial angel,” so in the image of a person that obtained the grace of the Holy Spirit, the historic and human reality, his physical aspect or the particular way in which he had to serve God (regardless of what his position was: apostle, hierarch, prince...), are expressed in his iconography with maximum exactitude. But that which is angelic and heavenly, his holiness—so the second reality—is not expressible by any human means. It cannot be indicated by the forms, lines, and colors instituted by the Church. Thus, every canonic icon is, at the same time, a historical witness as exact as possible and an image of the Kingdom of the Spirit, a revelation of the holiness of the world that is to come, a saint’s transfiguration (the image of the spiritual world irradiates on the face of a saint: an icon is an essentially anthropological, personal value. In man, and not only in the pneumatic man, we can already distinguish the configuration of the future world). Thus, an iconographic canon establishes not only the subject, *what* is represented, but also *how* it must be represented, the means by which the state of transfiguration must be indicated.

Just as the great saints left for us descriptions of the Kingdom of God dwelling in them by verbal images, other

47 *Col.* 2:9.

saints gave us the same descriptions using visible images, in a language of artistic symbols, and their testimony is just as authentic. It is the same theology, but in images instead of words. "We speak according to our contemplations," St. Symeon the New Theologian confesses, "and this is why what we say must be called a narration of seen things, and not a concept."⁴⁸ (Iconography, hymnography, as well as the thinking of some Holy Fathers reveal the essential and proper way of being-in-spirit, so the occulted elements of the octave era, already present here). Thus, as the Holy Scripture, a sacred image does not transmit ideas of human representations about truth, but Truth itself—divine revelation. Iconography is what can be most foreign of the concept of "idealist art," which presupposes a denaturation of reality in a subjective sense. The split between the word of Scripture and an icon—which is the consequence of secularization—is observed in the naturist and phantasmal representation of the Resurrection of the Lord. Trying to represent that which surpasses him—and ignoring the canon—an artist is obligated necessarily to invent according to his subjective taste, to improvise, and to idealize.

If we apply to iconographic painting the same criteria as to the realist painting that appeared at the end of Middle Ages in Italy and Flanders, we inevitably undervalue it beyond measure. It is however absurd to treat Byzantine painting, Florentine frescoes, and Flemish "retables" with the same criteria. They are two antithetic arts that differ not only in technique and themes, but also in their conception about painting. Beginning with the 15th century, the effort of Western painters tends to evoke the relief of objects, the modeling of shades and lights. They suggest depth by artifices of perspective, spatialize the planes, convey the escape points of the farther perspectives; brief-

48 *Or.* 63, par. 3.

ly, they substitute the simple decoration of surfaces with the representation of space.

An icon-making painter remains completely foreign to these searches. He does not try to copy nature; he is not preoccupied with anatomy or perspective. He is not at all interested in volume or plan...

In a word, he is not so much a painter, but rather a calligrapher. From this point of view, iconography is related stylistically with the decorative painting of Greek vases or Japanese stamps. One finds the same care, organized on a severe selection of lines, to attain the stylization of reality, its transformation in pure signification. In fact, this is one of the elements of the inner freedom of a Byzantine painter: he can "ignore" the data of "reality" only if he enframes them into a style, which is a guarantee of the authenticity of his artistic effort. We encounter, then, the special aptitude to detach silhouettes, to lengthen proportions, or to resume landscapes.

This art seems to become "abstract," but in reality it proves that it could rise to the altitude of the style. For Western painters, the conciliation between the realist imitation of nature and the exigencies of the style is an almost unsurpassable difficulty. It was said that drawing is "an art of sacrifices." We must acknowledge that these necessary sacrifices are made much easier for the iconographer by the extreme simplification of his technique. He works with already stylized elements, reduced to simple games of line. The only thing he still needs to do is to combine them so as to make a work of beauty.

Byzantine painting is a great art by the nobility and purity of the style. The simple composition, free of any burdensome addition, the idealism of expressions, the eurythmy and the delicate accord between figures and landscape, the clear and endearing coloring confers a rare and select charm to the authentic works of the genre.

Let us closely analyze each of the elements that concur to this impression of beauty. The limpid simplicity of the composition is one of the most constant characters of

the beautiful Byzantine icons. The details are always rigorously subordinated to the ensemble: rarely attention is distracted by unnecessary details. The artist is interested only in the essential. The merit for this simplicity rests in large part in the monumental character of any good Byzantine painting and in the ancient tradition of mural painting.

Second, the physiognomies of characters have something supra-mundane and supra-individual. Figures, costumes, and architectural and environmental decors are not dated or localized. Byzantine art is situated beyond space and time. This "supra-realism," which ennobles even the most mediocre works, raises the genre beyond any vulgarity and surprises, in a bourgeois and mercantile world, by his aristocratic distinction.

Another eminent gift of the byzantine painters is the sense of rhythm. Groups of figures undulate and harmoniously relate to one another. The lines call and respond each other just as the voices of a choir. The stylized landscape is in unison with the figures; it is not about a simple framework, but rather a kind of resonator.^{lxxvii} It is not satisfied with limiting the subject, but it also underlines and emphasizes it. It often happens that in scenes like "The Descent from the Cross" and "The Placement in the Tomb," the artist communicates his emotion less by the expression of the faces, which maintain an impassible and abstract character, but rather by the simple grouping of the silhouettes and the eloquence of calm or restless lines, springy or downcast lines.

Regardless of how skillful it were in combining the play of expressive or only ornamental lines, Byzantine picture is not however an exclusively linear and graphic art. One of its main attractions is, on the contrary, a fresh and luminous (joyful) coloring, in which the meaning of color and the taste of harmony are affirmed.

Truth—or reality—in Byzantine art is not an objective truth, but rather a supra-objective one. This art comprises not only the object, but also the organic ensemble of

meanings and states that were raised in the creator's spirit while contemplating the object. This considerably enriches the reality that was perceived at this higher level, until it becomes inseparable from it. This inevitable participation of the spirit in the artistic creation justifies and explains the freedom of Byzantine art and its audacity in relation to brute reality. Stylization is the effect of an operation from the spirit, from the creator that distinguishes within reality the spiritual lines akin to his own structure.

In this play of searches, ordered by a previous discovery, the Spirit feels freed from the often pressing and insupportable weight of things, and it extracts a profound joy from its freedom.

The Byzantine style offers to the artist the possibility of total freedom: the overcoming of physical necessity. However, in order for the new mode to not fall into an anarchic and empty phantasy, the Byzantine view lives in a "style" of freedom: freedom is solidly integrated in original categories, it breathes a superior air that nourishes it with consistent values that increase the suppleness of the spirit in relation with the ordinary world and prevents it from remaining suspended in nothingness.

V. THE APOCALYPSE OF JOB

The Holy Scripture—the universe of divine revelation that comprises our universe, although it paradoxically accepts to be also comprised in it—has a complex and mysterious interior articulation of the parts that compose it. A word is answered with another, a verse is fulfilled with another at a great distance in time, but in immediate proximity in their natural eternity, a book is closely related to another, surprisingly similar in its structure and intimate economy. In this way, certain centers of convergence of the meanings contained in other books and certain points of development of the mysteries first found in other parts, where they remain impenetrable, are organized within Scripture. Even if it were only for this reason, these privileged places would deserve the name of “Apocalypse,” of plenary revelation in which previous revelations are fulfilled. All the more a reason to consider that we are before an Apocalypse when we participate in the total, absolute experience of a being who covered completely the itinerary of suffering until his mystical death, who went beyond it, being resurrected by God, litigated with Him, was justified and, finally, was restituted to Eternity while still in his earthly existence. What an amazing, unique density of existential experience! This is a man who concentrates and summarizes in himself the destiny of all humanity, the drama of any being that finds himself at a certain moment in opposition to God himself. However, he resolves his drama genuinely, and not falsely rationalistically, Spinozistically, but in the only authentic way, therefore eschatologically, apophatically, beyond any categories of cognition and common morality. Thus, we can speak of an Apocalypse of Job, a personal apocalypse, situated between Genesis and Apocalypse, which enclose creation between them.

The essential problem of the Book of Job can be grasped and formulated in many ways: it is the problem of man’s drama, of theodicy, of human destiny. In any case, Job brings before us the mystery of the living *presence* be-

fore God, with everything that this implies: blessing, wealth, suffering, absurdity, death, madness, and inheritance of the eternal Kingdom. The universe revealed by the Book of Job is acute, tragic, and almost chaotic in its wryness. However, it especially succeeds to make us surmise the roots of this category of presence: that is, the total, definitive integration in a meta-cosmic and trans-historic economy, by which God himself is present in his creation and participates truly to its tragedies. To be truly present in God means to commune with the extraordinary and difficult dignity of being his collaborator, to accept to suffer in him and next to him for the final eschatological victory (God wants to win only by his weakness). This is why anyone who finds himself in God's "presence" enters the Apocalypse by this very presence, one way or another.

Thus, Job enters his crisis very personally. He loses his entire exterior regime of being—wealth, properties, children—and sees his bodily health taken away from him. Now, his suffering becomes essential, supra-individual. In his revelation while he was on the pile of trash, he imperceptibly goes from personal laceration, from his personal crisis, to the great cosmic crisis. Sitting on this bench of human drama, Job litigates with God. Paradoxically, God justifies Job who had fought with Him, while He rages against Eliphaz and his friends who have defended the irresistible and necessary absolutism of God's rule: "You have not spoken before Me what is true, as My servant Job has" (42:7). This is so because Job's protest, his refusal to accept a domination that excludes any dialogue between God and man, was a negative confession of the true nature of this rule. Job's reproach is a praise that exalts God even more, that penetrates in his mystery even more deeply, not wanting to stop over one "idea" that we may make about his rule. We are before an ideology that aims higher than all unskillful theodicies, which have as prototype the speeches of Job's friends. This is a scandalous theology for reason; it is indeed apocalyptic theology, one

expressed by symbol and antimony. We try to discern the elements of this apophatic vision here.

If the God of the philosophers and the scientists is only a first Necessity which orders the chain of causes and effects and automatically corrects any fortuitous deviation, without paying more attention to human freedom than to that of a mechanism, the God of the Bible, even in his anger, reveals himself as the one who assumed the risk of creating a universe whose perfection is also menaced by the freedom of those in whom this perfection must reach its supreme degree. This divine risk that is inherent to the decision of creating a being in the image and likeness of God is the peak of his omnipotence or, rather, it surpasses this freedom in virtue of a willingly assumed impotence. This is because “the weakness of God is stronger than men.”⁴⁹ It surpasses infinitely all the attributes of greatness and dominion that the theologians list in their treatises *De Deo Uno*. The God of theological manuals can only love himself. It is his own perfection that he loves in his creatures. The God of the Bible loves his chosen ones with a “stronger than death” love, and his jealousy for everything that separates his creature from him is “as cruel as Hades.”⁵⁰^{xxviii} The domination must be conceived in the terms of God’s personal love which requires a total conversion toward him from the freedom of his creatures, a freely consummated union. However, such an absolute exigency addressed to the freedom of the one you love would not be an exigency of perfect love if it were not a desire for absolute plenitude as this is realized in the loved one, willed by him, fulfilled with the collaboration of his own will.

If, indeed, things are so, the rule of God over the world that he created will be that much greater as it will

49 *I Cor.* 1:25.

50 *Song.* 8:6.

have less of the character of a dominion, in the sense that we usually attribute to this word, that of external constraint on another's will. The final fulfillment of the dominion of God will then be equivalent (in its never attained but infinitely approximate limit) with the removal of the rule in the union of with the One who rules with those over whom he rules. "God will be all in all"^{lxxix} or, inversely, the created creatures will become by grace what God is by nature.

Since the achievement of God's dominion coincides with the final deification of the created beings and since this final vocation of the creature cannot be automatically fulfilled, without the free consent of the angelic and human creatures, it must be that each step of the way that leads to this end implies an accord of these two wills: God's will and the created beings' will. From the error of the First Adam, error that made man (and by him the totality of the earthly cosmos) incapable to progress on the path of his vocation, to the moment in which Christ, "the Last Adam" (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ) will "recapitulate" in himself the fallen humanity, the accord between the two wills can only be external. This is actually the nature of the successive alliances of the Old Testament: Noah's, Abraham's, and finally Moses's, who imposes the Law of God's dominion to the people that God had chosen to fulfill the saving work that only he could have achieved. The law that made sin visible to man, making sin that much more dangerous, according to St. Paul, manifested man's servitude to a different dominion than God's. It is a "third will" to which the First Adam subjected himself freely, being seduced by the promise of a false deification, outside of God's love. With this perverse will of a spiritual power that is a foe to God, the dominion of sin and death was introduced in our earthly cosmos by man's mistake. The Law of Moses,

which was given through angels,⁵¹ revealed man's weakness in rapport with the "law of sin" by which the dominion of the angels of Satan, who became the prince of this world, is exercised. The agreement with God's will is expressed from now on in the confession of sin, in acknowledging the impossibility to be saved from the present situation without an intervention of God himself, and finally in having faith in a Promise that accompanies the Law, a Promise without which the Law could not be an expression of divine economy, "our tutor to bring us to Christ."⁵²

It is remarkable that God's answer to Job's "senseless words" ended with the description of Behemoth, which is called "the ruler of the Lord's creation,"⁵³ "the first creature," Leviathan, the "king of the sons of pride."^{lxxx} These monstrous animals, whose power can only be dominated by the One who created them, are not, of course, simple curiosities of the Hebrew bestiary. These hideous creatures that God reveals to Job represent the "subcelestial" power of the "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places,"⁵⁴ who became spirits of darkness by their revolt against God. Denouncing this dominion to which man subjected himself freely, God proposes to Job to crush Satan's vanity, so to tie the Leviathan in order to make a toy to his daughters.⁵⁵ Only then will He acknowledge that man can work his salvation by his own powers.⁵⁶ The dimensions of Satan's spiritual power which are revealed to Job highlight the amplitude of the cosmic catastrophe that was produced by man's sin, the blindness and the impotence of derogated freedom. Job's penitence (whose

51 *Gal.* 3:19.

52 *Ibid.*, 3:24.

53 *Job* 40:19.

54 *Eph.* 6:12.

55 *Job* 41:5.

56 *Ibid.*, 40:9.

“words without understanding darkened Providence”) consists in acknowledging, beyond the necessary and ineluctable character of the dominion that he had refused to accept, the freedom and the inner suppleness of divine economy, which always direct the earthly world toward the achievement of its supreme vocation, for which the fallen man is unable to collaborate.

Job's attitude of accusing God is contrary to that of his friends who, assuming the hypocrite role of defending God, defended, without knowing it, Satan's right to an unlimited dominion. Just as the majority of the apologists of the *status quo* do when they want to justify the legitimate character of the present condition of humanity, his friends make the legal moment absolute, projecting it on the very nature of God. In this falsified view, the different perspectives of human, demoniac, angelic, and divine reality, which are implied in the complex and mobile economy of salvation, are found telescoped, melted together and petrified in a unique vision of Necessity-God, similar to that of an inexorable and impersonal Ἀνάγκη of Hellenic paganism. This would be only a God of the Law, but not the One of Promise, a God who would dominate his creation, but would not engage in it, a God who does not accept the risk to be cheated in his love. However, Job aimed higher than his friends because he believed in the Promise without which the Law would have only been a monstrous absurdity, and the God of the Old Testament could not have been the God of the Christians. Thus, Job's mysterious and disconcerting drama opens the eschatological universe where it finds its “resolution” (the term is necessarily forced at this level), so where it is also already installed in a mysterious, sacred way, elevating a historical event which is destined essentially to eternity to an altitude that is above history. We are not referring to an abstract, static eschatology, which would only be a new elusion of the problem; it consists in establishing eschatology to the level of an epistemic category that allows us to take care of our business here, on earth, without paying attention to what

belongs to another “level.” The scandal of suffering? Injustice? The horrors of life? Everything will be resolved in its eschatological order or, rather, everything finds its resolution in a Kantian beyond, in an eschatology that is not (and will never be) Parousia, so Presence. Or, as we said above, Job’s enigma is the enigma of the presence before God who had not yet revealed Himself plenary, and so man had not yet had access to His presence (“no man can see My face and live”).⁵⁷ Briefly, it is the enigma of the confrontation between man and God under the apocalyptic species of a crisis, of the suffering of the righteous man who remains *firm* in his unblemishness.⁵⁸

Our passing “beyond” is an impossibility; it is the most inexorable and the most impossible of man’s aspirations. We have access beyond only by an ontological mutation. Otherwise, eternity becomes for us its own caricature, takes on the deformed image of necessity, of destiny, of a reality that is profoundly hostile to man, where he can no longer hope for salvation. The first important revelation of the *Book of Job* is precisely this: his suffering is the consequence of the absence of the Interceder that would “make justice” between him and God, would give him rest, and would justify him even in regard to Satan, who has relative dominion on him. “For You are not a man, as I am, with whom I could contend, that we should go to judgment together. Would that we had a mediator who would cross-examine and hear the case between us.”⁵⁹ Only such an ontological Mediator between the creature and God could open the access to authentic eternity, which otherwise remains heterogeneous to the substance of the fallen man. Job intuitively feels that his deliverance, his “salvation,” rests precisely on the fact that his senses are sharpened by

57 *Ex.* 33:20 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

58 *Job* 2:10.

59 *Ibid.*, 9:32–33.

the borderline experience that he has been through: he senses that “human rights” before God are much more profound than what the reasonable theology of his friends could imagine. He becomes more and more of a person, more ineffably defined as man in the presence of a divinity with inscrutable decrees. In his suffering, he exalts the dimensions of the person, accepts the dramatic reverse of this dignity and, in this way, arrives, little by little, to see prophetically that between a person—the living man—and the living God must appear a Mediator who would not ask questions differently, but would rather approach the world, creation itself, differently. In fact, on the itinerary covered on his inner destruction, there, on a pile of trash, Job progresses effectively, advancing from stage to stage (stimulated as well by the learned and benevolent discourses of his friends), so that God’s answer at the end does not appear by chance, is not produced now only because it must be produced sometime. Rather, it is because Job is only now worthy to glimpse the abyss of eternity that is opened apocalyptically, after he divested and left behind on the pile of trash other external epidermis of his understanding. Job may have been a moralist once, during the glorious time of his opulence. Doesn’t he remember when “If I laughed at them, they did not believe it, and the light of my countenance did not fail”?^{lxxxix} After that, in his suffering, he realizes that our opinions and consolations are like “ashes” and that we do not realize anything if, like his friends, “we speak of unjust things out of love for God... take His part and want to be His defenders.”⁶⁰ After this, in his final answer, he bursts, “As surely as God lives, who has denied my justice, the Almighty, who has made my life bitter”^{lxxxii} Indeed, Job is now worthy to receive the ample and astounding revela-

60 *Ibid.*, 13:7–12. [*Translator’s note*: I did not find the fragment in *Job* 13, so I translated it myself.]

tion of God, which will bring him to his “changing of the mind (*μετάνοια*), to that penitence in dust and ashes that ends his “crisis” and from which he will come out restituted.

Evidently, this crisis is not only human suffering that is exasperated beyond the limits of absurd horror, as we ordinarily conceive it. In fact, the rigorous “apocalyptic” moment of Job’s history resides in it: it is an essential crisis, so a judgment (*κρίσις*) as we would only meet after centuries, in the personal crisis of the God-Man Jesus Christ, whose suffering was prefigured, as the Fathers considered, by Job’s suffering. Such a crisis is produced only when a judgment about history, about its meaning and its *avènements*, truly takes place. History cannot be judged from within it, but only from an eschatological position, from a real or mystical coming-out of time. Of course, the final great crisis of history, its end, will be the Final Judgment, the Apocalypse. Until then, any time a personal story of a being ends abruptly (in suffering or death) and the transcendent abyss of meaning opens largely before us, revealing the essential mystery of temporal history, we are, indeed, before an apocalypse: a being comes out of time, the world has no longer influence on it, and the meaning of creation is contemplated from an eschatological point of perspective, from the presence before God. Let us emphasize this: the great crises of history are actually episodes of the metaphysical “fight” (the term is inadequate) between the living Eternity of God and the active Nothingness of a demon. Any time God’s intentions concerning the world are denied by an opposing will (or wills), the world suffers proportionally with its answers. A crisis is only a metaphysical confusion of history, the loss of its theotropic meaning, and, at the same time, the attempt to resolve, to eliminate the malign process from its interior (which, again, the apocalypse will accomplish universally and finally). And yet, there also are privileged cases when a being summarizes in itself the meaning of history and expresses it in its crisis: in this moment, man be-

comes able to collaborate with the divine plan, with profound history, and so eschatology appears. His crisis has then really the meaning and function of a judgment: the one who is pondered and expelled is the lying and absurd master of this world. Without a doubt, there is a total, perfect, and unique case that illustrates this situation: it is the suffering of Christ the Savior. He Himself presented his Passion as a judgment, in other words, as a crisis, when He said: "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."⁶¹ In fact, with an extraordinary metaphysical density, the entire moment of the Passion Week has a powerful eschatological, apocalyptic character: the Savior's discourses about the second coming, the Last Supper, which is a mysterious departure from historical time, and finally even the Savior's death, which represents the end of the world (in an intra-historical sense) and the entrance (still intra-historical) in the new eon.

The character of absolute uniqueness of the Christological "crisis" is conferred by the fact that Jesus accepted willingly to make himself the exponent of God's cause in history, to take sin and death on himself and to extinguish them in him for all humankind. In His agony on the Mount of Olives, He received not only the cup of suffering and death, but also, and above all, he accepted to appear guilty before God, "to become sin for us," even if there was no sin in him.

How is Job's crisis situated in regard to Christ's? Job was also, without knowing it and even without accepting it with the depth of an obligation, God's champion against Satan. By Job's unblemished suffering, Satan was judged and tossed out from the condition of a creature of God: on the pile of trash, Job experienced the torments of apocalyptic judgment. His tragic paradox, which he himself

61 *Jn.* 12:31.

could not understand (while his friends could understand even less), consisted in that he was, at the same time, God's "defender," His "advocate," but also His victim, someone persecuted inexplicably, a non-guilty "enemy" of God. In their attempt to comfort him and justify God, Job's friends becomes the devil's advocates, even without realizing it; in his attempts to contend with God, to defend *his* cause before the Lord, Job speaks more righteously than his friends because he defends a personal existence that he feels as infinitely more valuable than all the machinery of the impersonal determinism that his grandiloquent friends present to him. However, he holds foolish "words in his heart"^{lxxxiii} because he does not deepen the meaning of his suffering to the apocalyptic dimension of the "dispute" between God and Satan. (This may have led him to accept even more voluntarily, more Christ-like, his suffering; this is why the true and only answer to Job's suffering is the suffering and victorious death of Christ.) The only one who perhaps foresees the true meaning of things is the mysterious Elihu, the son of Barachel from Buz, who appeared unexpectedly at the end of the drama, without being preannounced; we do not even know when he came. His position is singular: it anticipates God's position so tremendously that a suspicion appears: isn't it possible that he may be a messenger, a covered "angel" of the One Most High? He "became furious; and he was very angry with Job, because he declared himself to be righteous before the Lord. He was also very angry with Job's three friends, *because they found no answer to Job, and yet affirmed that he was an ungodly man.*"⁶² The essence of his speech consists in proclaiming the impossibility of theodicy. The work of God is paradoxical, antinomic and mysterious, apophatic: "For God does speak—now one way,

62 *Job* 32:2-3 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition). The emphasis belongs to Scrima.

now another—though no one perceives it.”^{lxxxiv} If Job realizes that he is before a mystery that is, on the one hand, incommensurable with him (“For He... is above mortals”⁶³) and, on another hand, that He is also accessible when man is in the ontological state of humility (“Therefore men shall fear Him, for He does not regard those who believe are wise”),^{lxxxv64} then Job will be saved. In fact, Job is made innocent only after his submission to the All Powerful One is fulfilled to the end: giving up his wealth, his posterity, and his health was not sufficient. A total self-renunciation was needed, Job’s true mystical death, the immolation of the old man and the birth, at another dimension of the mind, of the inner man who is responsive to the mystery of transcendence. After the revelation of the mystery of God, Job “repents” and changes his mind that had spoken without understanding about “things too great and wonderful, which He did not know.”⁶⁵ Taking refuge in mystery, he finally acknowledges that the justice he thought he could claim was not true justice. Justice belongs only to God and is shared only with those who come out of time, one way or another, and pass victoriously over their personal apocalyptic moment and are restituted to eternity.

In fact, Job’s reestablishment in his plenary integrity (if we can speak this way) constitutes the third apocalyptic element of his drama. After his suffering (or his crisis) that is in fact his judgment, so the threshold of the eschatological order, the repetition given to Job is equivalent with his resurrection, with his passing in the beatific state. Job’s restitution to the situation that he had lost—a double-fold restitution—is a miracle that expresses Job’s glorification, the change, for him, of the old heaven and earth in a new

63 *Ibid.*, 33:12 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition)

64 *Ibid.*, 37:24 (*n. ed.*)

65 *Ibid.*, 42:3 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

heaven and earth, as the Revelation promises (21:1). Job after suffering is no longer Job before it, an earthly Job: we are now before a “transcendent Job,” assimilated to the state of glory, much closer to God, more in His presence than when he was bringing sacrifices of thanksgiving for his moral purity. The event of the repetition alone should be indeed sufficient to make us see the eternity in which Job is transposed after his crisis; repetition is, rigorously speaking, impossible in time, in the fallen time of history. It is the accomplishment of eternity, of absolute freedom that no longer needs to look for itself within time because it already possesses itself in eternity; possessing itself plenary, it perpetually repeats in an eternal, and yet ever renewed present (and this is the savor of repetition) because self accomplishment means, in eternity, the infinite growth within a given state. Job was transposed above history by the repetition that was granted to him: this is what Kierkegaard did not understand when he requested to have his past, history, repeated. Job understood that God “can do all things; no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”^{66lxxxvi} “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear:”^{lxxxvii} this is our historic situation, the indirect, second participation to metaphysics; “But now my eye sees You”⁶⁷ and, by this, I entered in the eternity of direct, immediate communication with You. Around the former carrion, which is presently resurrected, the vultures of eternity may now gather.

66 *Ibid.*, 42:2 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition)

67 *Ibid.*, 42:5 (Note of the editor of the Romanian edition).

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

- i In the Romanian educational system, students fulfill all general education requirements in high school. Once in college, they only take courses within their majors. The above mentioned thesis is the project that fulfilled the requirements for an undergraduate degree.
- ii André Scrima proposes at times his own translation of the original when he cites the Bible. If his translations suggest nuances, I attempt to render his Romanian into English while I also mention the text as it appears in *The Orthodox Study Bible*, which I use in all other cases. The line from the Proverbs cited here is rendered in *The Orthodox Study Bible* in this way, “The glory of the king honors deeds.” The Septuaginta says, δόξα δὲ βασιλέως τιμᾷ πράγματα.
- iii Scrima emphasizes the communion between man and God through the world. See also Alexander Schmemmann’ *For the Life of the World* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973): “The world was created as the ‘matter,’ the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament” (p. 15).
- iv While the original sin, that of separation, refusal of God’s grace, and reliance on one’s own powers, is characteristic to what humans have become (and so it is a human sin par excellence), it is non-human as long as we consider what humans are called to be. Scrima distinguishes here between man’s nature and man’s being after the fall.
- v Scrima cites directly from the French edition and offers his own translation in Romanian. In all such cases, I left the original edition in a footnote, since it is Scrima’s own note, and

- translated directly from Romanian to English. Throughout the volume, I have left all titles in French or German in the original, as they appear in the Romanian edition. If they were translated in Romanian or if the volume was written by a Romanian author, I also provide the English translation.
- vi Scrima does not mention the source here. The Romanian text is reminiscent of *Gal.* 3:27 and *Rom.* 13:14.
- vii Throughout this volume, Scrima uses the term *image* to point to man's creation in the *image* of God.
- viii As the majority of the theologians of Eastern Christianity, André Scrima emphasizes that the soul and the body are not two substances that form a human being in their coming together. Thus, the complete human is not achieved by the addition of a soul to a body. Instead, man's nature is given by his existence on the cross, and so man cannot be only spiritual or only material.
- ix See Plato's *Phaedo*, 64a: "the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death." Plato's *Complete Works* (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1997), edited by John Cooper is the source for all citations from Plato.
- x Spiritual. The Greek πνεῦμα means "spirit." In Homer, so prior to its use in Christianity, the word designates breath and is one of the terms that point to what may be considered the soul of a human being.
- xi I kept the "ist" ending because it suggests the dogmatic nature of the testament.
- xii See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Harper One, 1978), for a detailed account of Christological views. See also J.M. Hussey's *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 9–29).
- xiii Barthianism is a theological movement that originated in the writings of Karl Barth, one of the important Protestant theologians of the 20th century.
- xiv There is no closing parenthesis in the Romanian edition. I added one here because it seemed the most appropriate place for it.

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- xv Scrima cites Lossky directly from French, *Essai sur la Théologie Mystique de l'Eglise de l'Orient*. The volume to which he refers has appeared in English as *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press in 1976. In this volume, due to the difficulty of finding the passages that Scrima mentions, I translated into English Scrima's own translation from French to Romanian. However, I have left in Scrima's footnotes the French volume that he cites. Unless mentioned otherwise, I used the same approach with the other texts as well.
- xvi "Being is silence," in German in the original.
- xvii The Romanian term used here is *supraființial*. Dragoș Giulea proposed "beyond being," which is probably an equally good or even better translation. I chose to use "superessential" because the term is used in the English edition of Vladimir Lossky's *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, and I believe one can find strong influences from Lossky in Scrima's writing. The Greek term for "superessence" is ὑπερούσιος.
- xviii The expression is difficult to translate. In Romanian, it is *Tăinuitor al Treimii*. The word *taină* is used for "sacrament" but also for "secret." The verb *a tăinui* means to keep something secret. We are on the third apophatic stage, where *silence* and *concealment* are also revealing. Perhaps the participation in concealing the Trinity is the genuine revelation of it.
- xix Scrima writes here of the attributes of the human being.
- xx I used here the English edition of Lossky mentioned above, p. 219 (see endnote xv).
- xxi Parenthetical note of André Scrima.
- xxii Scrima suggests here the possibility of another sense that perceives mystery.
- xxiii Scrima does not provide the source for the citation, so I translated it directly from Romanian. I chose to say "the perception of the mysteries" because it seems the closest rendering of the Romanian expression *o simțire a tainelor*. We should also consider here that "the perception of the mysteries" presupposes a certain capacity that would allow you to "sense" them. Just as knowledge of the sensibles is achieved through senses and

- knowledge of the intelligibles by the mind, spiritual knowledge is the appropriation of mysteries by a certain capacity that would allow us to “experience” them.
- xxiv Scrima uses here a Romanian word, *inamisibil*, with French origins. It means “unable to be taken away; non-losable.”
- xxv In Romanian, “carved image,” which appears in the English translation in the Bible as “idol.”
- xxvi Scrima points here to the historical, human age, the one prior to the “age to come,” as the Nicene Creed states.
- xxvii I chose the personal pronoun instead of “it” because it better renders Scrima’s emphasis on the three *persons* of the Trinity. However, I used “It” for Divinity.
- xxviii In Romanian, the word “crucial” (same spelling in Romanian) comes from *cruce*, “cross.”
- xxix We follow here the Romanian edition of the *Apophatic Anthropology*, which includes only chapter I. This chapter was written at a later time, for the thesis written for his degree in Theology and defended in 1956. See footnote 164 for explanation.
- xxx André Scrima refers to the title under the annex.
- xxxi Scrima refers to members of a government, and not to ministers of various churches.
- xxxii Antony the Great lived for around 100 years, beginning with the middle of third century. He is considered a pioneer of monastic life in the desert. See “The Life of Antony of Egypt” by St. Athanasius in *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Paraclete Press, 2010).
- xxxiii Vlad Niculescu gave me the suggestion for this translation. As he pointed out, the Romanian term, *s-a înfundat*, “buried himself,” suggests a descent into the ground, so that he would rise again with Christ. In Romanian, it also has the connotation of going into a place forgotten by the world.
- xxxiv The reference is to *Mt.* 18:3—thanks to Vlad Niculescu for pointing it out.
- xxxv As in previous situations, Scrima cites texts without providing a complete detail of the reference. Here, he probably refers to the first edition in Romanian of the *Philokalia*.

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- xxxvi I preferred "enduring," as in the *New International Version*, in order to be in accordance with the Romanian text. *The Orthodox Study Bible*, which I have used throughout, has "continuing city." *The English Standard Version* offers "lasting," which is still preferable to "continuing" in this context.
- xxxvii Here is the version from the *Orthodox Study Bible*: "But God... made us alive together with Christ..., and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."
- xxxviii We find here the same expression from above, the Jerusalem above the heaven, or the supra-celestial Jerusalem. *The Orthodox Study Bible* proposes, as in the previous case, "the heavenly Jerusalem."
- xxxix Parenthetical note added to the text by Scrima.
- xl See *Mt.* 11:12.
- xli See Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (*Jn.* 4:1–26). Jesus says, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."
- xl ii *Jn.* 8:12: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
- xl iii See *Mt.* 22:30, *Mk.* 12:25, and *Lk.* 20:35.
- xl iv See *Jn.* 3:5. What follows in Latin is Scrima's own commentary.
- xl v "By virtue of God" or "on account of God." In Latin in original.
- xl vi In the East, the Lauds are part of the Orthros, a service that is usually held on Sundays before the Liturgy.
- xl vii *Isa.* 40:3; *Mt.* 3:3; *Mk.* 1:3; *Lk.* 3:4; *Jn.* 1:23.
- xl viii *Deut.* 8:3; *Mt.* 4:4, *Lk.* 4:4.
- xl ix Scrima omits this part: "and you will have treasure in heaven."
- l *Mt.* 8:20; *Lk.* 9:58.
- li In the *Orthodox Study Bible*, the final clause is rendered as "and all that I have is yours."

- lii In Romanian, the expression used for *Transfiguration* is *Schim-barea la față*, “changing the countenance.”
- liii Vlad Mihai Niculescu pointed out that the translation should be “You shall receive a hundredfold.” According to Niculescu, Scrima uses a version from the Gregorian Latin liturgical text: <http://gregorianik.uni-regensburg.de/cdb/5501>.
- liv He “became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”
- lv André Scrima’s words about humility are beautifully echoed by Anthony Bloom’s *Beginning to Pray* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970). He says, “Humility is the situation of the earth. The earth is always there, always taken for granted, never remembered, always trodden on by everyone, somewhere we cast and pour out all the refuse, all we don’t need. It’s there, silent and accepting everything and in a miraculous way making out of all the refuse new richness in spite of corruption, transforming corruption itself into a power of life and a new possibility of creativeness, open to the sunshine, open to the rain, ready to receive any seed we sow and capable of bringing thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold out of every seed” (35).
- lvi In Romanian, there is a play of words that is lost in the English translation. The two verbs used here are *a cunoaște* (“to know”) and *a recunoaște* (“to recognize”). A possible rendering may be *to cognize* and *to recognize*. *A recunoaște* also implies an acknowledgement of a certain evidence. When faced with truth, for example, one would *recognize* or *acknowledge* that it is indeed the truth.
- lvii The hours are services in Orthodox worship that represent the daily cycle. Nowadays, they are usually done in monasteries. Liturgical life is structured on daily (the services of the day, including the hours), weekly (governed by the weekly Sunday Liturgy), and yearly (structured around the major feasts) cycles. See Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000, p. 47–66). See also volume 4 of *The Church of Prayer* edited by A. G. Martimort: *The Liturgy of Time* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1986).

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- lviii *On the Discipline of Psalmody.*
- lix The Romanian word, *însingurare*, suggests an activity of approaching solitude, so I translated it with “arriving to a complete solitude.”
- lx As in other situations, Scrima does not provide the reference for St. John of the Ladder’s text. This is also the case for the citations from St. Basil and again from St. John of the Ladder below.
- lxi Scrima does not provide any reference.
- lxii Scrima does not provide any reference.
- lxiii The Jesus prayer, or the prayer of the heart, originates in hesychasm: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” For more on the practice of the prayer and its theological significance, see Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Jesus Prayer* (Catholic Truth Society, 2014), Frederica Mathewes-Green, *The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer that Tunes the Heart to God* (Paraclete Press, 2009). See also John Meyendorff’s book on St. Gregory Palamas, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974).
- lxiv See *Song*. 5:2, “I sleep, but my heart keeps watch; the voice of my beloved—he knocks at the door!” Mihai Vlad Niculescu pointed out this reference.
- lxv *Rev.* 22:17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”
- lxvi The two Romanian words used are *angajare* (“enlisting”) and *angajament* (“promise”). The translation loses again the etymological connection between the two words. *Angajare* suggests an already active participation, an enlisting in an activity that you already perform, which makes you part of something (the Kingdom, in this case). *Angajament* suggests a contract between two parts in which one of them promises to perform a certain action.
- lxvii Scrima does not provide any reference.
- lxviii Scrima does not provide any reference.
- lxix The Romanian term, *împărtășire*, is also used for communion.
- lxx Scrima does not provide any reference.

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- lxxi *Ps.* 2:7; *Heb.* 1:5.
- lxxii *Phil.* 4:4.
- lxxiii *Rom.* 8:15.
- lxxiv The Romanian word is *îmbunătățit*, which could be rendered in English as “improved,” “made better.”
- lxxv Scrima often does not provide the reference. The text comes from the canons of the 7th ecumenical council.
- lxxvi The Creed of Chalcedon states, “We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us” (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, New York, Harper, 1877, p. 62).
- lxxvii The term suggests communion: the landscape responds in agreement. One may say that it plays the role of the congregation, which responds to the utterings of the priest with “amen.”
- lxxviii The line in the *Septuaginta* is σκληρὸς ὡς ἄδης ζῆλος.
- lxxix *1 Cor.* 15:28: “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

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- lxxx The note in the Romanian edition sends to *Job* 41:34, which does not exist.
- lxxxi *Job* 29:24.
- lxxxii *Job* 27:2. I have chosen to use the translation from *The New International Version*. *The Orthodox Study Bible* says, “the Lord lives who thus judges me, and the Almighty who embittered my soul!”
- lxxxiii *Job* 38:2: “Who is this who hides counsel from Me, and holds words in his heart and thinks to conceal them from me?”
- lxxxiv *Job* 33:14. I chose to use *The New International Version* once again, since it is closer to the Romanian text. *The Orthodox Study Bible* states, “For when the Lord speaks once, of in another time in a dream.”
- lxxxv I translated here Scrima’s text. *The Orthodox Study Bible* states, “Therefore men shall fear Him, and the wise in heart shall fear Him.” The closest English translation to Scrima’s version is, to my knowledge, the *New King James Bible*, “Men do therefore fear Him: He respects not any that are wise of heart.”
- lxxxvi Once again, I used here the *New International Version*.
- lxxxvii *Job* 42:5.